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THE MAIDEN:

A STORY FOR

MY YOUNG COUNTRYWOMEN.

BY T. S. ARTHUR,

Author of "Sweethearts and Wives," "Lovers and Husbands," "Married and Single," &c.



PHILADELPHIA:

HENRY F. ANNERS.

1847.

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THE MAIDEN.

CHAPTER I.

DUTY BEFORE PLEASURE.

"ANNA, dear," said Mrs. Lee in a quiet tone to her eldest daughter, a young maiden over whose head the blossoms of only eighteen happy summers had fallen, "it is time you were beginning to dress for the party at Mrs. Leslie's."

Anna Lee sat sewing near a window, and was bending closer towards the light, as it was beginning gradually to withdraw before the shadows of an autumn evening. She let the work fall into her lap, and mused for a short time. Then turning her soft blue eyes upon her mother, she said,

"I believe I won't go this evening."

"Why not, Anna? You have made every preparation. What has caused you to change your mind?"

The maiden sat again silent for nearly a minute, evidently debating whether she should go out or not. Company had been invited at the house of an acquaintance, where she had fully intended to spend the evening.

"I don't think I ought to go," she replied, a little evasively.

"Why, dear?"

"I think I shall be happier at home, mother."

"But, we should not always consult our own feelings. Think whether your absence will not take from the pleasure of some of Mrs. Leslie's guests. Some of your young friends will miss you. I think I would go, Anna; if not for my own sake, for the sake of others."

"And may I not stay at home for the same reason?" said Anna, going quickly to the side of her mother, who sat in a large chair, her face pale and wearing an expression of languor. She drew her arm around her mother's neck as she spoke.

"You may, if such a reason can keep you at home," replied Mrs. Lee.

"I think it does require me to stay at home. You are not so well to-day, and I cannot bear to have you worried with giving the children their suppers and putting them to bed. John and Charley are rude to Margaret, and never will let her

do anything for them without a disturbance. Your head has ached dreadfully, and has only been easy for the last hour. If you should have to see after the children, the pain will come back, and then you will get no rest all night."

Mrs. Lee did not immediately reply. Her feelings were touched at the affectionate, self-sacrificing spirit of her child. But she could not bear the thought of having her forego the enjoyment of a social evening on her account.

"I think, Anna," she at length said, "that I am a great deal better, and that it will not hurt me in the least to see after the children. So don't think anything more about me, but go and get yourself ready at once."

Anna stood in an attitude and with an expression of irresolution upon her countenance.

"Go, dear," urged the mother, "I wish you to do so."

"I'll go and see after the children first."

And Anna passed with light steps from the room.

"Dear, good girl!" murmured the mother, sinking languidly back in her chair, as her daughter vanished from her sight.

Anna went to the dining room, where four children were romping and making a loud noise

—some singing at the top of their voices, and others pounding on the floor, and dragging about the chairs. Among them was a little girl named Mary, four years old, who was dancing and singing as loud as the rest. As Anna came in, she became quiet, drew up to her side and took fast hold of her hand.

“John,” said Anna, speaking in a mild, yet firm voice to the eldest boy, who was hammering on the floor, “Mother is not well this evening. Your noise will make her head ache.”

John looked up at his sister a moment, but did not heed her words. He continued to make as much noise as before.

“I’ve a beautiful story to tell you all,” the elder sister now said.

This had the effect she desired. John threw down his hammer, Charley let go of the chair he was dragging around the room, and all of them gathered quietly around their sister, and looked up eagerly into her face.

Anna told them a touching little story about some children whose mother took sick and died, and left them to be taken care of by strangers, who were not kind to them as their own dear mother had been. Tears were in the eyes of two

of the children. But John, though interested, seemed but little affected by the narrative.

"Tell us another story, sister," said Mary.

"Yes, sister, do," urged the other children.

And Anna told them another story.

"Now another."

"I've told you two good stories. And now I must get you all your suppers."

"You're not going to get my supper," said John, in an ill-natured tone. "I shall eat with father and mother."

"And so shall I," responded Charley.

"Oh, no," mildly returned Anna. "Mother has been sick to-day; so you must all eat your suppers together, and go quietly to bed. Your noise disturbs her."

"To bed, indeed! Ho! ho! I'm not going to bed this two hours yet."

"O yes, John, you are. If mother is sick, and wants you to go to bed early, I am sure you will go."

"I'm going to sit up. If mother is sick, my sitting up won't hurt her. I've got all my lessons to learn."

"You can study them in the morning just as well, and a great deal better. So, John, be a good boy, and eat your supper with the other children."

“No I won’t — so there now, Miss! And you need not say another word about it.”

Anna sighed, as she turned away from her brother, whose natural disposition was showing its inherent evil tendencies so early, and began to prepare the children’s supper. When it was ready, she lifted the two younger children, Jane and Mary, into their places, and then turning to Charley, she stooped over him and whispered something in his ear.

The boy instantly took his place at the table, with a smile upon his face. But John was not to be moved. He resolutely persisted in refusing to eat his supper then.

After Anna had helped all the little ones at the table, she went to where John was sitting in a chair, in a sulky mood, and taking a seat beside him, said, in a calm, mild voice,

“John, mother has not been well all day. She has suffered very much with head-ache, and is only now a little better. I want to go out this evening, but can’t begin to get ready until I have given you all your suppers, and seen you to bed. Won’t you then, for my sake, eat with the other children now, and then go to bed like a good boy?”

“No, I will not!” This was said very ill-naturedly.

“O yes, John, I am sure you will.”

“But I tell you I won’t. I’m not going off to bed just because you wish me to do so. Go, if you want to, but don’t trouble yourself about me. I’ll eat my supper when father comes home.”

Anna was grieved, as she often before had been, at John’s unkindness and self-will. And she even felt a rising emotion of anger ; but this she quickly suppressed. Turning from him, she waited upon her brother and sisters who were at the table, and when they were done, took them up into their chamber, and laid them all snugly in their beds ; not, however, before telling them several stories, and hearing them say in turn, a little prayer. Kissing each sweet face, she took the lamp, and descended to the dining-room. It was nearly an hour since she had left her mother in her own chamber. She found John still fixed in his resolution to sit up, as he was in the habit of doing. After one or two efforts to dissuade him from his purpose, she left him alone, and went into her mother’s room. It was still an hour before Mr. Lee was expected home.

“Why, Anna, dear, why are you not getting ready to go to Mrs. Leslie’s?”

“I’ve just got the children, all but John, off to

bed. He wants to sit up and eat with you and father."

"Well, let him. He can go to bed himself when he gets sleepy. So now make haste and put on your things."

Anna went out, and ascended to her own chamber. But she was little inclined to do as her mother had urged her. The effort she had made to induce John to do as she wished him, and his unkind return, had depressed her spirits, and caused her to feel disinclined to go into company. But this she conquered in a little while, and recollecting that she was to be called for at seven, she commenced making the necessary preparations. While engaged in laying out and arranging the clothes she intended wearing, loud and angry words were heard by her from the kitchen, between John and the cook. Descending quickly, in order to check the disturbance before it should reach the ears of her mother, she found that the perverse boy had been endeavouring to interfere with some of the cook's operations. That individual justly opposed him, and this produced a contention between them, the result of which was a blow over John's head with the tongs, well laid on, just at the moment of Anna's entrance. John was seizing the shovel, when his sister caught his

arm. Feeling that he had been in the wrong, and checked by Anna's presence, he let the weapon fall; though not without an angrily uttered threat of what he would do to the cook.

Anna now decided that she would not go out. If her mother had been well, she would easily have managed John. But Anna knew, from the excited state of her nerves, that if she were compelled to leave her room to check such a scene, it would bring back upon her the dreadful headache and sick stomach from which she had all day been suffering.

"It will be wrong for me to leave her, and I will not do so!" she said to herself, resolutely.

The person who was to call for Anna, and accompany her to the party, was a young man named Herbert Gardiner. The fair young face and sweet temper of Anna Lee had won upon his feelings; and, in consequence, he had thrown himself into her company whenever he could do so. As for Anna, all unconfessed to herself, her heart had begun to feel an interest in the young man. The fact that he was to call for her was a strong inducement. But a sense of duty was a much stronger feeling, and she suffered it, as has been seen, to prevail.

Such a state of mind, so far in advance of most

young persons, was not a mere natural growth—was not the regular maturity of germs of good, hereditarily derived. It was the result of sound maternal precepts, and a most earnest care that the tender mind of her child, in its development, should be moulded into a right form. Early had Mrs. Lee taught her first-born the highest and best lesson a human being can learn—to imitate God in seeking to bless others. She had taught her to deny herself, and to study to do good in all the relations of life. It is true, that the mother had a sweet temper to mould; and a natural ground of good from which quickly sprung into existence the seed she scattered with a liberal hand. Still, Anna had her own trials—her own struggles against her natural evils, that would lift their deformed heads often and suddenly, causing her exquisite pain of mind. But such temptations, and the consequent disturbed state, were good for her. They made her humbly conscious, that in herself, she was weakness and evil, and that only by resisting evil daily and hourly, could she rise into true moral strength and beauty. And it was because she thus, in conscious weakness, strove against all that was not pure, and good, and innocent in herself, that she grew daily purer, better and more innocent.

After fully deciding in her own mind that it was her duty to remain at home with her mother, who was not in a state to see after any of the children, should they awake and cry, as was often the case, and need attention, she went into her chamber and said,

“I believe, mother, I will remain at home this evening. I shall not feel happy if I go out, and my unhappiness will arise from a consciousness of not having done right. Do not urge me, for I believe to go would be wrong.”

“If you feel so, Anna, I will not say one word. Though I cannot but be grieved to think that you are deprived of the pleasure you would have had at Mrs. Leslie’s.”

“Not more than I shall gain at home, mother. Young as I am, I have many times proved the truth of what I have often heard you say—that the highest pleasure we ever have, is that inward peace which we all feel when we have denied ourselves some promised gratification for the sake of doing good to others.”

The mother’s eyes filled with tears as she turned them upon her daughter. She looked, but did not speak the pleasure she felt.

A domestic came in at the moment, and said that a gentleman had called for Anna.

"Mr. Gardiner, I suppose," Anna said, as she arose and left the room.

It was Mr. Gardiner, whom she found in the parlour.

"Good evening, Miss Lee!" he said, in a slightly disappointed tone, as Anna came in. "Are you not going to Mrs. Leslie's?"

"No," she replied, "I am sorry that you have been at the trouble to call for me. Mother has been quite unwell all day, and I do not think I ought to leave her."

"So you do not intend going?" This was spoken in a still more disappointed voice.

"No, I cannot go to-night. It would be wrong for me to leave my mother, and I try never to do anything that I clearly see to be wrong."

But this noble-minded declaration did not awaken in the breast of Gardiner a responsive admiration. He was disappointed, and he could not conceal the feeling.

After sitting for about ten minutes, the young man went away. The interview was not pleasant to either of them. To stay at home from a party just because her mother was not very well, he considered rather a stretch of filial duty; and she, perceiving the true character of his thoughts, shrunk from him instinctively.

From that time, Anna received his attentions with embarrassment. She did not reason much about it. She only felt repulsed. And that all this was right, will be seen in the next chapter.

Shortly after Gardiner left, Mr. Lee came home. Anna was still sitting in the parlour, in a musing attitude.

"Why, how is this, Anna? I thought you were going to Mrs. Leslie's to-night," he said with kind interest, sitting down by her side.

"And so I was. But you know mother has had a sick head-ache all day."

"Yes. How is she to-night?"

"She's a great deal better."

"Then why couldn't you go?"

"Because the children are very apt to get fretful and troublesome, and sometimes won't let any one see them to bed but mother or me. So I thought it best to give them their suppers first, and get them quietly put away for the night. After that was done I began to fear that they might wake up, as is often the case, and require attention; and I knew if mother went to see to them, her head-ache would return. She needs quiet and rest. These will be everything to her. If I had gone out, and anything had occurred on account of my

absence, to bring back her illness, I should have felt very unhappy indeed."

"You have done right, my dear," said Mr. Lee, kissing affectionately the fair cheek of his daughter. "I am sorry that you have been deprived of the enjoyment you would have had at Mrs. Leslie's; but it is all for the best. Even in the least things of our life, as I have often before told you, there is a Providence."

"I believe it, father. Already it has occurred to me, that it is for some good that I have been prevented from going this evening."

"It doubtless is, my child," returned Mr. Lee. "Good always springs from a denial of ourselves in order to benefit others. Ever think thus—ever act thus—and ministering angels will draw near to you, and guard you from evil."

Mr. Lee's voice trembled slightly as he said this.

"But I must go up and see your mother," he added, and turning from Anna, he ascended to Mrs. Lee's chamber.

CHAPTER II.

GARDINER'S TRUE CHARACTER EXHIBITED.

ON the evening previous to that on which our story opens, three or four young men were seated around a table in a public house, upon which were glasses, decanters and cigars. They were engaged in playing cards, smoking and drinking. Among them was Herbert Gardiner.

After playing at whist for an hour, during which time several five dollar bills were lost and won, cards were thrown aside.

"Give us a song, Gardiner. You have been winner to-night, and must be in a singing humour," said one of the company.

"Let's have another drink first," returned Gardiner.

Glasses were filled, and drained to the bottom.

"Now for the song."

It was given in quite a spirited style, but we cannot repeat it here. It would be a blot upon our pages.

Bravos followed the song, and another was called for.

Gardiner sang again without hesitation. But, as before, his song was grossly indelicate.

"How would you like a certain young lady to hear you sing that?" asked one of the party, looking into the face of Gardiner with a mischievous smile.

"What young lady do you mean?"

"That very modest looking one, by whose side you kept so close at Mrs. Farnham's last week."

"I don't take."

"You don't?"

"No."

"You're dull."

"Not I. Speak out plain."

"Miss Lee."

"Oh dear!" And Gardiner tossed his head half contemptuously.

"Why I thought you were in love with the girl?" remarked one of the company.

"Indeed! Did you suspect me of such a weakness? Really! I feel complimented."

There was something in the face of Gardiner that belied his words. His companions noticed this, and rallied him more strongly.

"He's over head and ears in love with her!"

Ha! ha! See his face! He blushes, absolutely! Gardiner blush! That is a phenomenon!"

"Not quite," returned the rallied individual, regaining the self-possession he had momentarily lost. "I believe that is a folly of which I have never yet been guilty. But come, gentlemen, let us be serious about this matter. You charge me with being in love with a certain Miss Lee. Now for the proofs?"

"You pay particular attention to her."

"Granted! But what does that prove? I pay particular attention to some dozen others. You must bring forward something more conclusive."

"You were by her side nearly all the evening, at Mrs. Farnham's."

"Because she seemed so pleased with my conversation that I couldn't find it in my heart to break away from her."

"Oh dear!"

"A fact."

"Then the girl's in love with you."

"That's another matter altogether." And the young man lifted his hands and eyebrows in mock surprise. "I'm sorry for her. But it is a weakness peculiar to her sex."

"Aint you flattered?"

"Exceedingly."

"She's a right nice little girl, Gardiner. I'd advise you follow up the impression you have made."

"I believe I will."

"Do."

"I will."

"Ha! ha! That's right. Hurrah for Gardiner! — Let's drink to his success."

"Fill the glasses."

"Here's to Anna Lee!"

"Aye, aye."

"Now for Herbert Gardiner."

The glasses were again drained.

"And now for the safe termination of the proposed courtship."

"No, no."

"What then?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner. A-hem!"

"Oh! aye! that's it. Fill up the glasses."

Very soon the whole party were, what is vulgarly called—"pretty well in for it." More songs were demanded and sung. They were scandalously obscene.

An hour longer was spent by these foolish young men in drinking, singing songs, and telling vulgar stories, when they separated.

Let the reader think of Anna Lee as she really

was, a pure minded maiden—one whose imagination had never been shocked with the picture of a scene similar to that which we have just described—one whose heart would have shrunk away and trembled could she have witnessed such a scene,—and then think of Herbert Gardiner as a lover; for such, he in reality began to consider himself. And it cannot be denied, that he had made some impression upon her feelings—that she felt more than an ordinary satisfaction when he was by her side. Does any one feel pleasure at the thought of Anna Lee marrying Herbert Gardiner? Does any one believe that he could make her happy? Her mind essentially pure—his mind essentially impure. She finding her highest delight in doing good to others—he in gratifying himself. She looking upward towards the fountain of light and love—he downward toward things sensual and corporeal. Her spirits in the rising scale—his in that which is descending. Shall they join hands, and go side by side on life's journey together? God forbid!

Gardiner had seen Anna a few evenings previous to the one on which the reader has seen him with his gay companions, and had then promised to call for her, and go with her to Mrs. Leslie's.

He did call, as has been seen, and went away, feeling disappointed and half angry with Anna.

"Too bad!" he could not help saying half aloud, as he turned from Mr. Lee's door. "The silly girl! To let such a trifling matter keep her at home. I don't believe she cares a fig for me, or she would have gone to the party, after I called for her, if the old Harry himself had stood in her way."

"I don't see your flame here," whispered one of Gardiner's companions to the young man, coming to his side soon after he had made his appearance at Mrs. Leslie's.

"No. Devil take the luck! She wouldn't come!"

"Why not?"

"Her mamma's sick."

"You don't tell me so."

"It's a fact."

"And she stays away on that account."

"So she says."

"Do you believe her?"

"Yes. I suppose she gave the true reason."

"Not a word of it. She meant to cut you?"

"Cut me?" in surprise. "Anna Lee cut *me*? You must be joking!"

"No. These girls are queer creatures, some, times."

"Humph! I'm not afraid. She's to be wooed and won right easily."

"You think so? Well, success to your suit. She is one of the sweetest girls I have ever met. She has not her equal here for beauty, grace, and sweetness of manner."

"You are right. And more than this, she has intelligence of no ordinary kind. Although she has never mingled in the best society, and is still quite young, she is fit to grace any circle. I don't know her equal. But, confound it all! she is not here, and I don't care a fig for any one in the room. I shall make myself scarce before an hour passes."

He was as good as his word. An hour had not expired before Gardiner was missed from the gay circle, in Mrs. Leslie's drawing-room.

This young man was the son of a retired merchant, who had gained in trade a very large property. Herbert, his only child, had received all the advantages of education that wealth can give; although, it cannot be said that he had improved those advantages in any remarkable degree. He was bright enough, as regards intellect; but a high

motive for study was wanting. His father's wealth and social standing, left him but little to strive for.

Old Mr. Gardiner had started in life without friends or capital, and had, by honest industry and steady perseverance, worked his way up, until he stood side by side with the most successful. He had a just estimate of the virtues by which he had risen in society, and often strove to impress his son with a deep regard for them. But his precepts did not take very deep root in the ground of the young man's mind.

As soon as he came home from college, he was placed in a mercantile house. He did not, however, take much interest in the business, although more to meet the requirements of his father than anything else, he attended to his duty sedulously enough to prevent his employers from becoming so much dissatisfied with him as to dismiss him. After he became of age, his father proposed that he should go into business with some one who had less capital, but a more thorough knowledge of trade than he possessed. Such a person was not hard to find. A young man, whose only capital was business capacity, honesty, and energy of character, soon presented himself. With him a copartnership was formed, and a capital of thirty

thousand dollars was placed in the hands of the new firm.

Satisfied with the part he had done—or, the part that had been done for him, viz., furnishing capital—Gardiner did not see that there were very strong claims on him for personal application. He attended at the store daily, and took a certain part in the general operations that were going on, but did not burden his mind with any details, nor trouble himself with any care as to the ultimate result of their operations. He had confidence in his partner, who, glad to get capital to work with, prosecuted the business with vigour and success, for mutual benefit. As for Gardiner, he took his pleasure in his own way. His companions, as has been seen, were not of the safest kind, nor his own moral character likely to be elevated by an association with them.

He was about twenty-three years of age when he saw Anna Lee, and became charmed with her beauty. He first met her upon the street. For more than a month he was at a loss to find out who she was, and this very mystery in regard to her, only inflamed the passion with which her sweet face had inspired him. At length he met her in company, and obtained an introduction. His marked attentions, and the evident pleasure

he felt in her society, did not escape the notice of Anna, nor fail to make an impression upon her. And more than this, she was not insensible to the fact, that he moved in a higher circle than any to which her position in society would admit her. He was the son of a retired merchant of great wealth; she the daughter of a man in moderate circumstances, who had to struggle hard to support and educate a large family. It was not long before the thought of Herbert would quicken her pulse, and the sight of him make the blood warmer on her cheek.

The reader can readily perceive, that in deciding not to go to Mrs. Leslie's party, Anna had exercised no ordinary degree of self-denial. Some may think, with her admirer, that her reasons for staying at home were hardly strong enough. But we are sure that most of our readers will approve her conduct.

CHAPTER III.

THE BEAUTY AND POWER OF GOODNESS.

ANNA remained sitting in a slightly pensive mood, in the parlor below, after her father left her. The manner of Gardiner had disturbed her feelings. It opened up to her eyes a new view of his character. It presented him to her from a new point of vision. She had denied herself a desired pleasure for the sake of a sick parent, and he had not approved the act—nay, had clearly disapproved it.

“Have I done right or wrong?” she asked herself.

Then reviewing her conduct, and weighing all the reasons that had decided her course of action, she murmured, “Right,” and rose to her feet. The tea bell rang at the moment, and she ascended to the dining-room, to meet her father and mother, with a cheerful, happy face.

“I’ll pour out the tea,” she said, as her mother came in, leaning upon her father’s arm. “You take my place.”

"No, dear. I can wait on the table well enough," returned Mrs. Lee.

"But I can do it better. So sit down in my place."

"Yes, dear, you had better," said Mr. Lee. "Even the slight exertion of pouring out the tea may disturb your nervous system too much, and bring back that dreadful pain in your head. Let Anna wait on the table, this evening."

Mrs. Lee objected no farther, and Anna did the honours of the table.

John was very quiet, and had a thoughtful look. The fact was, remembering that Anna had urged him to eat his supper and go to bed when the other children did, because she wished to go out, and seeing that, although called for, she had yet remained at home, he felt that he had been unkind to one who was always kind to him, and who, on account of his perverseness and ill-nature, had been deprived of an expected enjoyment. Had Anna permitted herself to get angry with John, and been led to speak to him from that state, he would have remained indifferent. But the gentle forbearance and self-denial of his elder sister touched the boy, and awakened his better feelings. After tea he called her aside, and told her he wanted to go to bed, and that he was sorry he had

not done as she wished him to do before. She forgave him with a kiss, when the boy threw his arms around her neck and burst into tears.


“You are so good, and I am so bad,” he sobbed. “O sister, I wish I could be as good as you are.”

With kind words Anna soothed her brother's mind, and urged him, in future, to try and love all around him, and to be obedient to the wishes of those who sought to do him good. He promised never to disregard what she should say to him, and to strive and conquer his bad temper.

She kissed the penitent boy again, and he went with subdued feelings, but strong resolutions to do right in future, up to his chamber.

“What a dear good girl our Anna is,” said Mr. Lee, after Anna, on leaving the tea-table, had been drawn out of the room by John.

“She is a blessing to our house,” returned Mrs. Lee, earnestly. “What should I do without her? For my sake, she has denied herself the pleasure of going to Mrs. Leslie's to-night, although she had made every preparation, and had promised herself, I know, much enjoyment. I urged her not to think of me; but she was firm, and presented her reasons in such a way, that I could not strongly oppose her.”



"She has acted from a sense of right, and I am glad that she has done so."

"I cannot but say the same, although my feelings have plead strongly for her; and I have felt sad to think that my indisposition was the cause of her disappointment."

"To me," returned the husband and father, "this little incident, trifling as it may seem, has given a deeper satisfaction than anything that has occurred for a long time. I see in it the true safeguard for our child, in this the most danger-fraught period of her whole life. She is beautiful, innocent, accomplished. To know her is but to love her. Already we find that many young men are beginning to seek her acquaintance. That in company she is courted, and her hand sought in the dance by those who have strong powers to captivate a maiden's heart. If a love of doing right—if a spirit of self-denial for the good of others—be the principles that rule in her life, they will be as a panoply of defence for her in the dangerous paths through which she will have to walk. We cannot keep our child out of the way of temptation. We can only give her true principles to sustain her in them."

"Yes, yes," returned the mother, in a half-musing tone, replying only to a portion of her hus-

band's remarks—"she is already awaking in the minds of those with whom she associates, something deeper than a passing regard. One young man, I have noticed of late, who is more than others attentive to her. He called, by appointment, to go with her to the party to-night."

"Who is it?"

"Young Gardiner."

"Indeed!" This was said with apparent pleasure. "I saw him dance with her through two sets at Mrs. Farnham's, and chat with her afterwards a good deal; but I supposed him nothing more than a dancing acquaintance. And he really called here?"

"Yes."

"Herbert Gardiner belongs to one of the best families in the city."

"Yes, and his father is said to be a man of immense wealth."

The father and mother ventured no more. The fact that young Gardiner seemed inclined to be pleased with their daughter, gratified them both more than they were willing to express to each other.

When Anna re-entered the room, and their eyes rested upon her face, it was with warmer affections, mingled with something of pride.

CHAPTER IV.

TRUE MAIDEN DELICACY AND ITS OPPOSITE CONTRASTED.

"WHAT in the world kept you away from Mrs. Leslie's?" said a young friend and companion, about her own age, who called in to see Anna Lee on the next day. Her name was Florence Armitage. "We had a most delightful time. Everybody was asking for you, and everybody was disappointed at your absence. I was afraid you were sick, and have called in to see. What *did* keep away?"

"Mother was not well, and I did not think it right to go out and leave her."

"Was she very ill?"

"She had one of her violent attacks of headache, and was in bed nearly all day."

"I'm sorry. But did that keep you at home?"

"Yes. The children were to look after, and, I knew if I were out of the way, and mother not able to attend to them, that there would be trouble. Something, I was afraid, might occur to disturb

her mind, and bring back the head-ache; and then she would have been sick all night. I would rather have missed a dozen parties, than that should have happened."

Florence did not seem altogether satisfied that the mere ~~fact~~ of her mother's not being well, was a sufficient ~~reason~~ why Anna should forego the pleasures of company. But she did not say this. She only remained silent for a moment or two, and then began to speak of the delightful time they had had.

"I don't know when I have spent a more pleasant evening," she said. "We missed you very much. And that isn't all. Your absence deprived us of the company of another, whose presence all would have welcomed. Or, at least, it was the opinion of some of us that such was the case."

"Of whom do you speak?" asked Anna.

"Of a certain young man."

The eyes of Anna fell to the floor for an instant. Then raising them to the face of her friend, she said,

"Speak out, Florence. Who do you mean? I know of no one who was absent on my account."

"O, yes you do."

"No, Florence."

"Mr. Gardiner was not there." And as Flo-

rence said this she looked at Anna with an arch smile.

The latter could not prevent a soft blush from stealing over her face, and her eyes were again cast upon the floor. Lifting them, however, after a thoughtful pause, she said to her friend in a serious voice,

"Florence, are you sure Mr. Gardiner was not there?"

"He came, it is true; but only staid a little while. It was almost as good as if he hadn't been there at all."

"But you ought not to say that my absence kept him away."

"No. Only that your absence caused him to go away." This was laughingly said.

"You have no right to draw such an inference, Florence. I would much rather it should not be done. I am yet too young to have my name associated with that of any young man."

"What harm can it do, Anna? I am sure you needn't be ashamed to have your name mentioned with that of Herbert Gardiner. I certainly should not. I only wish he would take a fancy to me. Mother would have to have something more than a sick head-ache to cause me to decline going to

a party with him. Such a prize don't go a begging every day."

"Why do you call him a prize?"

"Why?" And Florence looked really surprised at the question. "Why? Isn't he rich? Isn't he one of the most elegant and agreeable young men you have ever seen? I don't think you can point out his equal. Try now, and see if you can?"

"As to that, my acquaintance with young men is not very extensive. I am not prepared to make any comparisons. As I before said, I am yet too young to suffer my mind to become interested in these matters."

"How old are you, pray? Perhaps I have mistaken your age. Are you fifteen yet?" This was said laughingly.

"I believe I am about eighteen."

"It isn't possible! And too young to make comparisons between young men, or have a lover, Why, I'm not quite your age, and I have had two or three lovers. It's delightful!"

Anna shook her head.

"I know you like young Gardiner," continued the friend. "You can't help it. And all I blame you for, is that you didn't go to Mrs. Leslie's with him, through thick and thin."

"And neglect a sick mother?"

"It wasn't any serious matter; that you know well. Only a sick head-ache. You could have gone well enough."

"Not with a clear conscience, Florence, and without that, I could not have been happy anywhere. External circumstances are nothing in the scale of happiness, if all be not right within. I can say from my heart, that I enjoyed myself far more at home than I could possibly have done at Mrs. Leslie's, no matter who was or was not there."

"You don't deny, then, that you like young Gardiner?"

"I said nothing in regard to him. Why should I deny or affirm on the subject? I don't know anything about him. I have only seen him a few times in company; and I would be a weak one, indeed, either to think or wish myself beloved by a man who is almost a total stranger."

"He is no stranger. Doesn't every one in the city know his family and standing?"

"But what do you or I know about him? Of his feelings, character, or principles?"

"You are a strange girl to talk, Anna."

"I think not. Isn't it of importance to know something of the governing principles of the man

whose attentions are received?—Who is admitted, as your intimate, in the character of a lover?"

"Certainly. But, then, it is easy enough for any one to see, at a glance, what a young man is. I can do so. There is young Hartley, who tries to be so gracious with me. It is no hard matter to see what he is."

"How do you estimate him?"

"As a very narrow-minded person. I don't like him at all."

"Why?"

"I have just said. Because he is narrow minded."

"That is, you think so. Now, I differ in opinion, judging from the few opportunities I have had of observing him. I should call him a young man of strong good sense; and one who could never stoop to a mean action."

"You don't know him as well as I do."

"Perhaps not. As before intimated, I do not think much about the characters of young men."

"It seems you have thought about Hartley's character."

"My opinion of him is only one of those first impressions which are usually received by us all. I have met him some three or four times, and in every conversation I have had with him, I have

been pleased to remark a strong regard for truth and honour, and a generous feeling towards every one, except those who deliberately do wrong."

"But he is mean, I am sure."

"How?"

"Narrow minded, as I have said. Penurious, if you please."

"As to the latter, I have no means of judging. How do you know it?"

Florence thought a moment, and then said—

"I will tell you. Fanny Ellsler, you remember, was here three or four weeks ago. A few of us girls were dying to see her, and we hatched up a plot among ourselves, that we would make some of our gentlemen acquaintances take us to the theatre."

"Why Florence!" ejaculated Anna, in grave astonishment.

"To be sure we did! You need not look moon struck about it. Where is the harm, I wonder? Well! I talked at Hartley until I was downright ashamed of myself, but the mean fellow wouldn't take. Sarah Miller had no trouble at all with Mr. Granger. She had only to turn the conversation upon Ellsler, and then express a strong desire to see her, to be invited at once. Harriet Jones did the same with young Erskine, and all was settled

to her heart's content. But I tried my best, and Hartley would not understand me."

"What did he say?" asked Anna, curious to learn how the young man had received such a strange application—for such it really was.

"Oh!" tossing her head, "he affected to disapprove of the attendance of young ladies at the theatre—at least while these public dancers were exhibiting themselves."

"My father thinks as he does."

"As to that, so does mine. But I don't agree with him in all his opinions. He's like a great many other old people; old-fashioned in his notions, and full of prejudice against modern improvements."

"But, would you have gone to see Fanny Ellsler dance against your father's wishes?"

"Would I? Certainly I would—and did."

"Florence!"

"Certainly. If I were to do only as he thought and said, I would have to give up all pleasure. Hartley wouldn't take me, and so I tried Mr. Archer; who did not need a second hint."

"Not William Archer!"

"Yes."

"Did you really go to the theatre with William Archer?"

"I did."

"My dear friend," said Anna Lee, with a look of deep regret, laying her hand upon the arm of her young and thoughtless companion, "how could you be so unguarded?—how could you be so imprudent? I need not tell you that his character is very bad."

"With that, you know, I had nothing to do. I merely went to see Fanny Ellsler with him, and was much obliged to him for taking me. His character, good or bad, can have no effect upon me."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes; very sure. What effect could it have?"

"Apart from the friendly feelings you may have entertained for a bad man, which are always more or less injurious to an innocent-minded woman, you have placed yourself in a position that may cause you to be lightly spoken about by those who do not know you. Whenever a woman appears at any place of public amusement with a man of notoriously bad character, she becomes, in a degree, tainted. Light things are said about her, and she no longer holds that position in the minds of truly virtuous persons that she did before."

"You speak from the book. How do you know all this?"

"I have heard my mother say as much, and in her judgment I have great confidence. Besides, it is a truth that must be apparent on the least reflection."

"Oh, as to that, I have heard my mother say such things a hundred times over. But I let them go in at one ear and out at the other. These old people think it necessary to give line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a good deal, to us young things, as if we had no more sense than little children, and were blind as bats."

"I think you are wrong to talk so. I am very careful never to do anything against my mother's opinion of right."

"Does your mother approve of the theatre?"

"Not in its present state."

"Have you never been there?"

"O yes. Several times."

"Indeed! And against your father and mother's opinion as to its being a proper place for young ladies?"

"No—for I was not made fully acquainted with their views on the subject, until after I had been for a few times."

"Who went with you?"

"My father and mother."

Florence lifted her hands in astonishment.

"Your father and mother take you to the theatre! Goodness! Mine would as soon take me to my grave."

"Are they not aware of the fact that you went to see Fanny Ellsler?"

"They? No indeed! And I wouldn't have them find it out for the world. It would almost kill them. They would think I was ruined completely."

"Such being the case, Florence, I cannot but say, that I think you have done a double wrong—first, in deceiving your excellent father and mother; and next, in going to the theatre with a man whom every pure-minded woman should shun with horror."

"In that we may differ in opinion. But, there is one thing that I do not exactly understand," replied Florence Armitage; "and that is, how your father and mother could take you to the theatre when they disapprove of theatrical representations."

"No—don't misunderstand them. They do not disapprove of scenic representations in the abstract, but of theatres as now conducted. If the stage, I have heard my father say, were only made an accessory to virtue, it would be all-powerful

for good, because principles are seen and felt more clearly and distinctly when in ultimates; that is, when brought out into their lowest and fullest plane of activity, or, in other words, personified."

"But still I do not understand how your father could take you to the theatre as it is, when he disapproves of it."

"I can explain that. He knew that I must hear the stage alluded to—he knew then my imagination must be excited by glowing representations of its attractions, and he feared that; possibly, I might be tempted to do as you have done."

"How?"

"Go without a parent's knowledge."

"Well, never mind that. Go on."

"He, therefore, determined to go with me himself, to guard me from evil. To go with me himself, and point out the perversions of the drama so clearly that I might see them myself, and from a rational conviction shun their false allurements."

"And did he succeed? Could you see the evil he was so anxious to point out?"

"Clearly. It was as plain to my eyes as a dark spot in the beautiful azure of heaven."

"Indeed! I must have been blind then; for I could never see it."

“And my vision might have been obscured, had not there been one by my side to take the mist from my eyes.”

“What great evil did you discover?”

“I saw that vice and crime are too often made attractive, instead of being condemned. Let me give an instance. On one occasion my father took me to see the opera of *Fra Diavalo*.”

“Were you not delighted?”

“I was very much pleased. The music of the piece was exquisite. Some of the chorusses have haunted me ever since.”

“And were you not struck with the bold bearing, the nobility, if I may so speak, of *Fra Diavalo* himself?”

“I must confess that my sympathies were too much with him; and that, when he was circumvented and killed at last, I was disappointed. On returning home, my father said — ‘How were you pleased Anna?’

“‘Oh, I was delighted,’ I replied.

“‘Do you think that representation, aided by such noble music, calculated to inspire any heart with a love of virtue?’

“This was putting a new face upon the matter. A thought had not once occurred to me.

“ ‘The brigand’s song was *encored*. Were you pleased to hear it again?’

“ ‘Yes,’ I replied.

“ ‘Did your mind revolt at the sentiments?’

“ ‘No,’ I answered.

“ ‘Why?’ he continued.

“ ‘It was the music, I suppose, that made even cruel words, and a boast of evil deeds, pleasant.’

“ ‘Yes, that was it, aided by the external attractions of beautiful scenery, and a gay company, apparently filled with delight at the brigand’s rehearsal of his valiant achievements.’

“ ‘Do you think it good to feel such pleasure at witnessing the representation of evil?’ asked my father.

“ ‘I could not but answer ‘No.’

“ ‘Suppose,’ he continued, ‘that the spirited air just alluded to, had been sung to true and elevating sentiments—to a national song, for instance, inspiring the heart with a love of country—would not every one who heard it, and in whose memory it fixed itself as a familiar friend, feel a deeper love of his country than he had ever known before? Extend it farther. You doubtless felt an emotion of pain, when the brigand lost his life. That is, you regretted to see a robber and murderer receive the just reward of his deeds; for all

the charms of music, scenery, and inspiring circumstances, had led your mind away into an overmastering sympathy with a bold brigand. How much better, had the hero of the opera been a true nobleman of nature; one who sought the good of his fellows; one who could perform deeds of daring—could be bold, and brave, and noble in the cause of virtue. No harm, but great good would result from such representations. The stage would be the hand-maid of morality and religion, if pledged to virtue, as it now, alas! seems pledged to vice. You understand, now, my child, I hope, why I think it is not good for young persons to visit the theatre, as it now is?”

“I could not but approve all my father had said. His remarks opened up to my mind a new view. He had given me a standard by which to estimate the stage, and I could now determine its quality for myself. And I do determine, and pronounce its tendency to be downward, and its effects injurious to young minds.”

“Really! you meet the whole matter in the broadest manner. Then you think there is no good whatever in the stage as it now is?”

“If there were no good at all—if all were evil, in scenic representations, as they are now conducted—my father says, and it seems reasonable,

that they would no longer be permitted to exist in the order of Providence. There cannot be such a thing, he says, as mere gratuitous evil; that is, evil which is not permitted, in order to elevate some from lower degrees of depravity, or to prevent their sinking into deeper moral obscurity. In all the representations of real life that we see upon the stage, we find something that is good—something that impresses the mind with the beauty of truth and virtue—something that makes us think of God as a Divine guide and protector. Take, for instance, in the opera just alluded to, that portion of the chamber scene in which Zerlina murmurs a prayer in her sleep, and the hand of the assassin, already raised to strike her innocent heart, is stayed, and the wretch shrinks away in trembling consciousness that He to whom that prayer was sweetly breathed, even in sleep, was present. That was good. It was a boldly redeeming point, and could not fail to make a due impression on every mind. Have you seen *Fra Diavolo*?”

“O yes.”

“You remember the scene?”

“Yes. It was more distinctly impressed upon my mind than any other.”

“How were you affected by it?”

"Not pleasantly."

"Why?"

"It caused me to recollect, too distinctly, that I was at that very moment acting directly in opposition to the wishes of my father and mother; that I could not now pray, as I had once prayed in earlier years, that God would watch over me while in sleep."

"You can now understand, I am sure, what I mean by the balance of good yet to be found in the stage."

"Yes, Anna, I do," Florence said, after a silence of nearly a minute. She spoke in a voice that was slightly touched with sadness. "And from my heart, I wish that my parents had laid aside a portion of their prejudice, and taken me to the theatre, as yours did you, and then as carefully lifted my mind up and enabled me to see the good and evil so intimately blended, as they doubtless are. You have been often, you say?"

"Yes; that is, a half a dozen times, perhaps."

"Did you see Ellsler?"

"No."

"I think you would have been delighted with her dancing. It was, truly, the poetry of motion."

"I did not wish to see her."

"Why?"

"I have witnessed stage dancing."

"Who did you see?"

"Celeste."

"Ah! I wanted to see her badly; but no one invited me to go. How did you like her?"

"There was a charming grace and ease in all her motions; and some of her pantomimic performances were admirable. But my cheek burned the whole time. Could a modest woman expose her person as she did? No! nor could a truly modest woman look upon such an exposure without a feeling of deep shame and humiliation."

"But crowds of the most respectable women went to see her, night after night. She could not have exposed her person more than Fanny Ellsler did; and yet I saw present, Mrs. L——, and Miss T——, and Mrs. S——, and dozens of virtuous women, and no cheek was covered with blushes of shame. Indeed, every one was charmed with the creature's airy and sylph-like motions. No one thought of the exposure you allude to."

"Didn't you think of it?"

"Yes; perhaps I did."

"And so did others. Would you be willing to expose yourself, as she did, in a drawing-room filled with gentlemen and ladies?"

"No."

“Why?”

“I shouldn’t be willing to exhibit myself under any circumstances.”

“Suppose your friend Mary Gaston were to dress herself in short clothes, and flourish about in a company of men and women, after the fashion of Fanny Ellsler, would you approve of it? Wouldn’t you blush with shame?”

“I think I should.”

“Is the fact of the exposure any different because it is made under the different circumstances now presented? I think you will not say so. Depend upon it, the way in which stage dancing is now conducted, is but a tribute to an impure and perverted taste; and no woman, in my opinion, can look upon it with pleasure, without parting with a portion of woman’s purest and most holy feelings.”

“If you were to say so to some persons that I know, you would offend them,” Florence said, in a more subdued tone than any in which she had yet spoken.

“I could not help that. I believe all I say, from my heart.”

CHAPTER V.

A DANGEROUS CHARACTER.

HERBERT GARDINER, notwithstanding the light manner in which he had permitted himself to speak of Anna Lee, among his convivial friends, felt strongly attracted towards her. As has been seen, he could not hide the disappointment he felt at her refusal to go to Mrs. Leslie's party. He believed the reason she gave to be the true one, but considered it altogether insufficient.

"If she cared as much about my company as I do about hers," he said to himself, as he walked in half ill-humour away, "she would have gone if all the family had been sick. What do I care for this party if she is away? Not that!"

And he snapped his fingers disdainfully.

"But I shall have to go, I suppose, for the mere sake of appearances; though I shall soon make myself scarce. Confound the girl's mother! What business had she to get sick just at this moment?"

With such thoughts, the young man slowly

pursued his way towards Mrs. Leslie's dwelling. Mrs. Leslie was a widow lady, with one son and a daughter, who occupied a kind of middle ground between the highest and second class. Her husband, who had been dead some years, belonged to one of the best families in the state. From causes not necessary to mention here, he lost a large portion of his property; and when he died, left his family only in moderate circumstances, although by no means poor. Compelled to give up to a great extent, the style in which she had lived, Mrs. Leslie yet retained all of her former associations. Gardiner was intimate with her son; and, therefore, often visited in the family.

Mr. Lee had lived neighbour for some time to Mrs. Leslie, and owing to this circumstance, his wife and daughter became acquaintances of the latter. Pleased with Anna's beauty, intelligence, and charming manners, Mrs. Leslie introduced her into company at her house, and this brought her into a different circle from the one she had been used to moving in. Here she first met Florence Armitage, with whose opinions and conduct the reader has already been made acquainted; and here she also first met Herbert Gardiner, who had been struck with her appearance on the street. The father of Miss Armitage was in better circum-

stances than Mr. Lee, although his position in society was no higher. Gardiner's station has already been mentioned.

Mrs. Leslie was one of that dangerous class of persons known as match-makers. She had made some efforts to bring about an arrangement between Gardiner and her own daughter; but that was set at rest by the announcement of Emma Leslie, that she had already engaged herself to an individual, to whom the mother did not feel inclined to make any serious objection. Having, therefore, no views of her own in regard to the young man, she, very naturally, following the bent of her inclinations, looked about to see who would suit him. The evident impression made upon his mind on meeting Anna Lee, determined her course of action. The young man was half in love, she saw, and also perceived that Anna was not displeased with his attentions.

"The very thing," murmured Mrs. Leslie, with an inward glow of delight. "They will make a charming couple. She is worthy of just such a match, and it shall be made for her."

What Mrs. Leslie considered a "good match," regarded external circumstances alone. Of the moral fitness of a young man and a young woman for becoming married partners, she never thought

for a moment. It was beyond the circle of her ideas. To Gardiner, she said, as soon as she could get his ear after his first meeting with Anna,

“She’s just the one for you, Herbert.”

“Do you think so?” returned the young man, smiling.

“Yes; and I am really in earnest. I wonder I never thought of her for you before.”

“It is strange, certainly. How much obliged I am to my friend Mrs. Leslie, for being so thoughtful for me. And you really think this young lady just the thing?”

“I do, seriously.”

“She is certainly a sweet girl.”

“You might say so, if you knew her as well as I do. Her mind is as sweet as her face.”

“How long have you known her?”

“For some months.”

“Tell me who she is, precisely?”

“The daughter of John Lee, President of — Insurance Company.”

“Ah! I know him well enough; and a very clever man he is. But then, Mrs. Leslie, I can’t make love to the daughter of the President of an Insurance Company. My old people would never hear to it.”

“Tut, my boy! If you can really love her,

pick her out and elevate her to your own station. My word for it she will grace any position. As to your father and mother, any mere objection arising from pride or prejudice will soon give way; and then they will thank you for choosing one whom they cannot but love."

"There is something in that; but I must see her a few times more. I have often met her in the street, and been struck with her appearance; in fact, I have been trying for the last three months to find out who she was."

"Ah, indeed! I am glad of that. Depend upon it, you were cut out for each other."

In this way, Mrs. Leslie managed to fan into a flame the prepossessions which Gardiner had felt in favour of Miss Lee. To Anna, she broached the matter with more caution; for she understood her character very well. At first the maiden seemed to shrink in displeasure from anything like a connexion of her name with that of the young man. But Mrs. Leslie soon saw that what she had said, was working its way into her heart.

When next Anna met Gardiner, her eyes drooped beneath his earnest gaze. Mrs. Leslie saw this, and her lips closed in a quiet smile of self-satisfaction.

"That matter is certain," she said to herself, with exultation.

In all this, the mistaken woman imagined herself actuated by the best of motives. She was sure that Anna was worthy the hand of Gardiner; and she believed that, as the bride of one in his station, she could not but be happy. She knew nothing about the real moral qualities of the young man; indeed she never once thought about them. All was right, in that respect, of course.

"Where is Miss Lee?" she asked of Gardiner, on the night of the party at her house, which had been given for the purpose of bringing certain young persons together, and giving them a chance.

"I thought you were to have called for her?"

"And so I did. But she wouldn't come." The young man spoke as if a good deal disturbed.

"Wouldn't come? From what reason?"

"She made an excuse that her mother was sick."

"The exact truth, if Anna said so."

"No doubt she was a little indisposed. But I don't believe she was so sick but that Anna could have left her easily enough. In fact, I know this to be the case, from the very manner in which she spoke of her mother's indisposition."

"You come to conclusions too hastily, my

young friend," returned Mrs. Leslie. "If Anna told you that she could not go out on account of her mother's indisposition, she told you only the truth. That was her reason, and none other; depend upon it. I know her well; and know, that if she had not wanted to come, she would have told you so, without the slightest hesitation. Anna Lee has a noble love of truth."

"Perhaps so," and Gardiner moved his head incredulously.

"I know that she has, Herbert. And you must believe me in this."

"If I can."

"You are a weak and foolish young man. Faint heart never won fair lady. If you give up so easily, you are not worthy the hand of so sweet a girl as Anna Lee, who has not her equal in this city. I must find some one else to carry off the prize."

"As you please," coolly replied Gardiner.

"Very well. I shall not long have her upon my hands. There is a quiet-looking young man whom you have sometimes seen at my house, named Hartley. He took a fancy to Florence Armitage, some time ago, but it did not last long. He gradually moved himself off from her. Why, I have never learned, though I sounded him more

than once on the subject. Well, this young man has had his eye upon Anna ever since his coldness towards Florence commenced. So far, he has contented himself with observing her, so to speak, from a distance. But I can see his eye begin to brighten up, now, at her name; and he has already asked me several questions about her."

"Hartley? Who is he?"

"Don't you remember to have met him?"

"No."

"Let me see if he is here. Yes, there he sits near the window, talking to Caroline Etheridge."

"Not that smoothed-faced genius?"

"He hasn't your wealth of whiskers, certainly."

"He beginning to think of Anna Lee! Ha! ha!"

"It is true, upon my word."

Gardiner gave his head an indifferent toss, saying, as he did so, —

"If *he* can win her, let him wear her."

"A woman's heart, Herbert," replied Mrs. Leslie, "is a strange substance. It takes impressions easily, but when they are once made, it is impossible to efface them. I should be sorry indeed that any hand should first impress the heart of Anna Lee but yours. See, yourself, that this does not take place."

Their conversation had already been too much

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prolonged under the circumstances, and Mrs. Leslie moved from the young man's side, to mingle more generally with her company. When left alone, Gardiner's eye turned instinctively towards Hartley.

"Who is the young man you spoke to me about a little while ago?" he said, when next he found himself at the side of Mrs. Leslie.

"I believe he is clerk or junior partner in a Market Street house."

"Humph!" And Gardiner turned away with a manner that said — "is that all?"

The fact that Anna did not come, made the young man altogether indifferent to the pleasures of society. It was all in vain that a bevy of young girls, with bright eyes, and witching smiles, sought to entrap his heart. He scarcely saw them. Even Florence Armitage, who would have liked to make an impression on him, spite of her friendship for Anna, could not get him to her side.

In about an hour, the young man quietly stole away, and went to the theatre. It was past two o'clock when he came home, more fully under the influence of wine than he had been for months. But neither his father nor mother knew of this. Their senses were locked in slumber, hours before he sought his pillow.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAIDEN'S FIRST STRONG TRIAL.

It was not long before Mrs. Leslie managed to bring Anna and Mr. Gardiner together at her house. This she did adroitly. Neither of the parties suspected her agency in the matter.

Since their last meeting, Anna had examined her own heart closely ; she had also thought much about Gardiner, and endeavoured to analyze his character as accurately as possible. The result was, a distinct conviction that, although she could not but feel an interest in him, he was not one whose moral feelings could harmonize with her own. The glimpse she had obtained of his character, when she told him that she must remain at home on account of her mother's illness, was enough to cause her to shrink from him.

In meeting him again, she could not but manifest the reserve and coldness she felt. This disturbed him ; and his disturbed feelings reacted on hers, and thus drove them further asunder. Mrs. Leslie saw all this, and tried hard to remove it ;

but without success. When Anna and the young man parted that night, both felt unhappy.

From this time, Gardiner, who was piqued at Anna's coldness, was resolved to win her. The very indifference she manifested, only inflamed the passion he felt. Mrs. Leslie became his confident and adviser in the matter, and through her he gained a knowledge of all her movements; but not of all her feelings, for these were not communicated freely to the woman who professed for her so warm a friendship.

Thus matters went on for several months, during which time Gardiner called frequently at the house of Mr. Lee to see his daughter, and managed often to throw himself into his company, in a business way. In every casual or prolonged interview with Mr. Lee, Gardiner was exceedingly polite and deferential. The effect of all this upon the father's mind was favourable.

As for Anna, the oftener she met with the young man, the stronger was the sphere of repulsion that surrounded him. She could not tell why; but her heart shrunk from him more and more, daily. Spite of all she could do, she could not forget his manner, nor the expression of his face, on the evening she had declined going with

him to Mrs. Leslie's, on the plea of duty to her sick mother.

One evening she was sitting at her piano, and playing over for her own ear some favourite piece, when a domestic came in, and said that her mother, who was alone in her room, wished to see her.

Anna went up, as desired.

"Sit down, dear; I have something I wish to say to you."

The manner in which Mrs. Lee spoke, caused the heart of Anna to sink heavily. There was something strange and ominous in it. She dropped into a chair by her mother's side, and looked earnestly in her face. Something half whispered to her the nature of what she was to hear.

"Your father, Anna, who went out a little while ago, wishes me to say to you," began the mother, in a voice that was neither clear nor composed, "that Mr. Herbert Gardiner has asked of him the privilege of claiming, with your consent, your hand in marriage."

The maiden rose quickly to her feet, and stood with a quivering lip before her mother.

"You have no doubt expected as much, Anna," added Mrs. Lee, after a pause. "Mr. Gardiner has visited you frequently of late."

Anna tried hard to speak, but it was nearly a

minute before she could articulate. At length she said, in a tremulous voice, the tears starting from her eyes as she spoke—

“Mother—dear mother! Don’t speak to me of that. I love you too well to wish to part from you.”

And she sunk by her mother’s side, and hid her face in her lap. Mrs. Lee was deeply moved. She placed one hand tenderly upon Anna’s head, and, with the other, clasped the hand of her child that had fallen upon her bosom. For some time all was still. Then Mrs. Lee endeavoured to raise Anna from her recumbent position; with some difficulty she succeeded in doing so, and placing her in a chair by her side. But the face of the maiden remained concealed in her hands.

“Anna, dear,” again began the mother, “I respond with deep tenderness to the love you express. It will be a sad day for me, when I am called upon to give you up. But I cannot hide from myself the fact that I shall have to meet and go through the trial, sooner or later. I will not shrink from it, even if it should be to-morrow, if your best interests were concerned.”

There was a pause, but no reply. Mrs. Lee resumed.

“Let your mother speak to you freely. She

loves you best. Heretofore, she has always communicated with you unreservedly. Let her do so now. Be calm. Be a woman. Meet this subject, the most important in your life, with unruffled feelings. As I before said, Mr. Gardiner has declared to your father that he wishes to address you with views of marriage. He, in fact, through your father, offers you his hand. Do you accept it?"

There was a breathless silence.

"Speak, my child! What is your decision?"

"If left to my decision, mother, it is soon made," was the murmured reply.

"It rests with you, of course."

A quick shudder passed through the maiden's frame, which was distinctly felt by Mrs. Lee. Then she said in a firm voice,—

"I decline his offer!"

"Anna!" and Mrs. Lee half started to her feet in surprize.

"Did you not say that I was to decide?"

"True. But how can you decide against *him*, of all others?"

"Because, of all others, I least regard him. The oftener I see him, the more strongly I am repulsed by him."

"Why?"

“I cannot tell.”

A long silence followed, during which the mother's mind gradually became clear, and its perceptions distinct. Both herself and husband had been greatly pleased at the offer of Gardiner, and neither of them had entertained the most remote idea that Anna would have declined it. In doing so as promptly as she did, Mrs. Lee was thrown back upon herself, disappointed and confounded. But her good sense, true perceptions, and genuine affection for her child, restored, gradually, her mind's true tone and balance.

“It is for you, and you alone, Anna,” she at length said, in a serious, yet affectionate voice, “to decide this matter, and your decision must settle the question. But in making it, have you well considered?”

“Mother, I have. Though too young to be called upon to decide a matter of so much importance, I have yet been compelled to do it; and it has not been without many a hard struggle, and many an earnest prayer for guiding light to Him whose wisdom is a lamp to our feet. I cannot say I have not been tempted strongly to make the decision in his favour.”

“You knew, then, of his intended proposition to your father?”

“No. But I heard from a mutual friend, that he was visiting me with serious intentions of marriage, if I would consent, which seemed to be thought a matter of course. At that time I weighed the matter well, and shortly afterwards decided my course. Nothing has since occurred to make me waver, but rather to confirm my resolution. The oftener I meet him, the more repulsive does he seem to me. Sometimes I have a feeling of suffocation when in his company. And never do I come into his presence, without sending up an almost involuntary prayer, that the Lord would encompass me with a band of angels.”

Mrs. Lee drew her arm tightly around her child. She was a woman with a true heart, and enlightened perceptions, and was, therefore, satisfied that Anna was not governed by any childish impulse. That the mind of her daughter was pure as virgin innocence itself, she knew; and she also knew, that the internal repulsion felt towards Gardiner, must arise from the opposition of the spheres of their moral qualities, felt as their thoughts were directed towards each other—for mutual thought makes mental presence, as perfectly as bodily proximity makes physical presence. Feeling thus, not the honour nor wealth

of the world could have tempted Mrs. Lee to sacrifice her child.

In about an hour, Mr. Lee was heard coming in at the street door; and Anna, first kissing her mother tenderly, glided up to her own chamber. Closing the door after her, she sunk down by her bed-side upon her knees, and remained in that attitude for nearly half an hour. When she arose, her face was very pale, but elevated in expression, and beautiful to look upon. Seating herself by the window, she lifted her eyes to the pure sky, jewelled with its myriad stars, and bathed in the soft moonlight. There was about her feelings a holy tranquillity—a deep consciousness of having acted right in a matter involving most vital consequences. The scene accorded with her feelings. Her state of mind was such, that nature could speak to her heart in its low, but earnest voice, a language free from human perverted passion. She listened to this voice. Her heart felt its breathings, and answered to them as the murmuring æolian answers to the gentle breeze that seeks carressingly its yielding strings.

“This is my first strong trial:” thus she thought after a time—“the first temptation my woman’s heart has had to endure. How easily might I have fallen into this snare, but for the right in-

structions, and the protecting sphere of a true-minded mother. She gave me right principles by which to estimate all things around me, and guided my opening affections to things pure and elevated. Had I not been blessed with such a mother—so wise, so thoughtful, so judicious—my weak heart might have been dazzled by a brilliant offer, and I led to accept it, to the destruction of all my best hopes here, and perhaps hereafter.”

Anna slightly shuddered as this idea came vividly before her mind.

Some readers may think, that the little knowledge Anna had of the character of Gardiner, was not enough to cause her to feel, in rejecting his suit, so strongly as here represented. Let such a one know, that a maiden with moral feelings as pure and unselfish as were those of Anna Lee, needs but to have a corner of the veil lifted, in order to enable her to determine the quality of a lover's mind. As the quality of the whole ocean may be determined by that of a single drop, so may she, by a single clearly-seen phase of his moral character, determine its whole character. And Anna Lee did so. Not fully, at first, but undoubtingly; when, added to her rational convictions, came an instinctive feeling of repulsion towards him, as one who was impure, and deeply selfish.

CHAPTER VII.

TRIED AND PROVED.

ANNA shrunk from meeting her parent, on the next morning. What would be her father's views of the course she had taken, she could not tell. She believed that he would not for a moment hesitate to approve her declaration; and yet doubt would cross her mind, and disturb her young heart to its very centre.

When the breakfast bell rung, she descended from her chamber. Her first glance was at her mother's face. The expression of that told her instantly, that all was not right. She did not look at her father for some time after. At length her eyes sought his countenance; it was thoughtful, and somewhat stern. What could it mean? Did he wish her to marry a man against whom her whole heart revolted? It could not be! Yet why this change?

So deeply did the unhappiness evidently felt by her mother, and the stern look of her father, affect Anna, that she found it impossible to swallow her food, and soon retired from the table.

Before Mr. Lee left the house, he took his wife aside, and said, in a serious voice —

“Anna: you must not let this matter go to rest at once. An offer of marriage, such as this, can never be had again for our daughter. Think! Herbert Gardiner is the only son of one of our wealthiest and most esteemed citizens. The character of the family is untainted, and that of the young man, as far as my knowledge goes, unexceptionable. What folly, then, for our child to refuse such an offer on the mere pretence of a repulsion of spheres. For that, if I understand it, is the only objection urged.”

“Do you not believe, husband,” returned Mrs. Lee, in a voice almost sad, “in the doctrine, that around every individual is a sphere of his moral qualities, as perceptible to the moral sense of another in whom that sense has not become obtuse, as is the sphere of the quality of a rose, in its odor, around the rose, and perceptible to the physical sense?”

“That doctrine is no doubt true, but—”

“And do you not believe,” interrupted Mrs. Lee, “that our Anna’s moral sense is unperverted?”

“I do.”

“Is it not well, then, to regard its response

as readily as you would regard the response of your tongue, when brought in contact with a deleterious or offensive substance?"

"True in the abstract," replied Mr. Lee, whose usually well balanced mind had been thrown from its just equipoise by the flattering and externally advantageous offer made to his child.—"But I am not so sure that it is true in its practical applications now."

"I believe that it is," Mrs. Lee firmly replied. "And, as the mother of Anna, I would rather see her laid, in her maiden sweetness, in the grave, than become the wife of a man for whom she has so strong a feeling of repulsion as that entertained towards Gardiner,—no matter what external advantages might be offered. External advantages! What are these, my dear husband! when set against internal discordance? Nothing! Nothing! Dust in the balance!"

Mr. Lee still looked grave. The offer of Gardiner had flattered a certain weakness in his character, and obscured the good sense for which he was distinguished. Mrs. Lee had also felt greatly pleased. But her interview with Anna had made all right so far as she was concerned.

The conversation which passed between the father and mother on the preceding evening, was,

perhaps, the most unpleasant ever held by them. Mr. Lee would not hear to Anna's objection, and Mrs. Lee was equally firm in sustaining her daughter in the position she had taken. The discussion was kept up for a long time, and ceased at last, not in the settlement of the difference, but in the unsatisfied and unhappy silence of both parties. The morning, it has been seen, presented no better aspect to the affair.

Still unreconciled to his daughter's objection to Gardiner, Mr. Lee left home, and went to his office. Nothing more passed between Anna and her mother on the subject during the morning. Both avoided speaking about it. At dinner time, Mr. Lee was grave and silent. His manner affected Anna so painfully, that she was obliged to leave the table. As she did so, her father glanced at her, and saw that her eyes were not only full of tears, but that large drops were falling over her cheeks.

Anxiously did Anna wait for his return at evening, in order, once more, to look into his face, in the hope that its coldness would have passed away. But the more Mr. Lee thought about the matter, the more he was dissatisfied. There was, therefore, no light in his countenance for his daughter's eye. There still rested a heavy cloud upon his brow. This continued for three days; at

the end of which period, he was to give an answer to the application made by Gardiner. The nearer the time approached for meeting the young man, the more unhappy did Mr. Lee appear in the presence of his family. On the morning of the day on which a reply to Gardiner's proposition was to be given, he seemed unusually grave. Poor Anna was wretched. Never in her life had she suffered so acutely. She loved her father with the purest feelings—with the deepest tenderness;—there was no sacrifice that she dared make, that would not have been made for his sake, cheerfully. But more had been asked than she could, in conscience, do. For, with her, the marriage rite was felt to be a religious ceremony, and the marriage union one that should be made in the sight of heaven,—thus she had been taught to regard them by her mother, who, since her seventeenth birthday, had sought, gently and almost unconsciously to her child, to lead her to think of marriage as the most holy act of a woman's life.

There were times, it is true, when she felt like yielding to her father's wishes; or, to what she had the strongest reasons for believing were his wishes—of giving herself up, passively, if her heart were crushed in doing so. But the precepts of her mother had been too deeply stored in her

mind. She understood clearly, that in the sight of heaven, she dared not make such a sacrifice. That marriage was too holy a thing to be perverted.

Anna knew that on this day an answer would have to be given to Mr. Gardiner—and she, therefore, understood why her father seemed more than usually oppressed in his feelings. After he had gone out, she went up to her own room, and there spent the whole morning alone. Anxiously did she await his return at dinner time. As the hour of his coming approached, the unhappy girl became more and more wretched. An undefined fear took hold of her—a dread of some impending evil. When the clock struck three, and she heard, soon after, her father's well known footstep along the passage, and on the stairs, her heart stood almost still. Mr. Lee went direct to his wife's chamber. Ten minutes more of anxious suspense passed, when Anna heard the ringing of her mother's bell. A domestic went up to her room. Then the steps of the same domestic were heard ascending to her chamber. The door opened.

“Your mother wishes to see you.”

The maiden started, and turned as pale as death. But she obeyed the summons, though with a sinking heart. At her mother's door she paused for nearly

a minute, and strove, by a powerful effort, to subdue her agitated feelings; but she strove in vain. When she entered, she was hardly conscious of anything beyond a fear of something undefined. But her eyes sought instantly her father's face. A great change had taken place. Instead of the stern, cold, offended look that his countenance had worn for three days, it was subdued, and tender, and full of affection. He reached his hand towards her, and she sprang into his arms, and sunk weeping upon his bosom.

"Dear father! you love me still!" she at length murmured, lifting her head, and looking him in the face.

"Love you, my child? I have always loved you; but now more deeply than ever."

"Then I am happy—happy!" she said, again letting her head fall upon his breast. I want no other love but the love that makes this home so sweet. It is the first love—the best love—and the most unselfish of all."

Mr. Lee drew his arm tightly around his child, as a response to the sentiment she had just uttered.

"Yes, my daughter," he said, "the loves that make our childhood's home happy, are the most unselfish. May they be long continued to us."

"Amen," was the solemn response, breathed

half involuntarily, yet sweetly, by the maiden, as she clasped tightly her father's hand.

Mrs. Lee's eyes were full of tears; but her whole face was elevated and glad. She looked calmly on the scene passing before her, silently lifting her heart in thankfulness for so good a child.

"Will you pardon the late strangeness of my manner towards you, Anna?" Mr. Lee said, after a little while, raising his daughter up, and looking into her face.

"Do not speak of it, father," she returned, quickly. "If you love me—if you do not blame me—if you will let me still call this my home, and you my best beloved, I ask no more. My cup will be full; full to the brim."

"Blame you, Anna? No! If there has been any blame, I must bear it. You have been right. Love you? We cannot tell you how much we love you. And may the day be far distant when you shall go to another home!"

"You have made me happier, dear father, than I have ever been," Anna said, struggling to hide the emotion that was swelling in her bosom. "Do not again feel offended with me. You have taught me to act from a sense of right in all I do,—you have wisely sought to elevate my understanding, and have given me principles by

which to determine all my actions. These principles I will ever strive to make rules of conduct. By them I will seek to determine between right and wrong, and choosing the right, I will endeavour to abide by it, in all firmness and conscientiousness."

"Do so, my child, even if your father, strange as such a thing may be, should rise up in opposition. Obey him just so far as he wishes you to obey the truth he has taught you, but no further. You are now a woman, and by your own acts you must be justified or condemned. Take no step in life, without a clear perception that it is right. Seek aid and light from all who are wiser than yourself, but let their *wisdom* guide you, if guided by others at all. If you cannot see with them, do not act from them. Avoid this, as you would a great evil."

After a slight pause, Mr. Lee added,

"I saw Mr. Gardiner to-day, and declined from you his offer. Deeply thankful am I that you had the resolution to refuse him. You acted with true wisdom, and a noble firmness that I shall ever admire. Of all that occurred, your mother will inform you at another time."

CHAPTER VIII.

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

WHEN Mr. Lee went to his office on the morning of the day named as that on which he was to give an answer to Herbert Gardiner, he felt in a very uncomfortable state of mind. The cause for this was two-fold. First, he could not help feeling a strong desire for the proposed union; and second, he felt that the interview with the young man, would be an embarrassing one. But it could not be avoided.

He was sitting in his own private room, about eleven o'clock, when Gardiner came in, smiling pleasantly, and bowing with perfect ease and self-possession. But in a few minutes his manner changed. The disturbed state of Mr. Lee's mind was communicated to his own.

"You know the nature of my business, Mr. Lee," he said, after talking indifferently for a short time. "What is the answer I am to receive at your hands?"

"I regret exceedingly," returned Mr. Lee, "to

be compelled to decline your very flattering offer ; but my daughter is firm in her opposition to our wishes in the matter. We have—”

“Your daughter objects?” the young man said, with an instantly flushed face, rising quickly to his feet. “Humph!”

There was an air of contempt and conscious superiority in the manner of Gardiner, that seriously offended Mr. Lee.

“Yes sir,” he said, his own manner also changing. “She objects, and she, doubtless, has good reasons for it ; for she never acts from prejudice or caprice.”

“Ha! ha! Don’t she indeed?” The young man had lost control of himself, and spoke very contemptuously. He was quick-tempered, proud, and could ill bear anything like opposition. The unexpected rejection of his suit from one whose social position was below his, had chafed him severely.

Mr. Lee’s eyes were fixed instantly upon the young man with a rebuking look. This, while it made him conscious of the error he was committing, did not tend to soothe the sudden irritation of his mind. For nearly a minute he returned Mr. Lee’s steady gaze ; and then with a muttered oath, he turned on his heel and strode from the room.

The father of Anna drew a long breath, as soon as he found himself alone—sat with eyes upon the floor for some time, and then got up, and walked to and fro, in a deeply abstracted mood. While doing so, one of the Directors of the Company, of which he was the President, an intimate friend, came in. He noticed that Lee was disturbed, and inquired the reason; when the interview just had was related.

“The puppy!” ejaculated the friend. “And he really had the assurance to offer himself to your sweet Anna?”

“He offered himself,” replied Mr. Lee, “but why should that be called assurance.”

“Humph! You certainly don’t know him.”

“I never heard a breath against him, in my life.”

“I have then; and words too. Why, this Herbert Gardiner, is no more fit for the husband of a pure-minded creature like Anna, than I am to consort with an angel of the third heaven!”

“You speak strongly.”

“Not more so than I should speak. It is strange that you have never heard his character I thought that was notorious.”

“He is in business with a very excellent young man.”

“Oh yes; his capital does that. But a business

connexion and a marriage are two very different things. I might be willing to enter into business relations with a man, that I should not like to see the husband of my daughter."

"Very true. But tell me something specific about Gardiner."

"He is, in the broadest sense of the words, *a man about town*. Do you understand what that means?"

"I do. But are you certain?"

"I know it to be the case. His associates are often of the vilest character, and his habits exceedingly irregular. Depend upon it, he would have cursed your child in marrying her. From all I have seen and heard of that young man, I would sooner see Anna in her grave than his wife!"

"Thank Heaven! There is no danger of such a sacrifice. But why should he have sought my daughter's hand?"

"It is a tribute to her loveliness. Even one like him could bow before it. But the love of mere external grace and beauty by a man without principle, is only of brief duration. These do not minister long to his selfishness—and then the flower that charmed for a brief season is thrown

aside with indifference, or trampled upon with scorn."

When Mr. Lee returned home, his feelings were widely different from those with which he had left his family in the morning. The reader has seen the change.

CHAPTER IX.

A COLD AND CALCULATING LOVER. ;

"Ah, William! is it you," said Mrs. Leslie, coming into her parlour. "Thomas only said that a gentleman had called to see me. The stupid fellow! I thought he could recollect your face."

"And did! but, like a great many other gentlemen (for I should call your Thomas a gentleman), he is deficient, no doubt, in the memory of names."

"You seem to be in a very good humour with yourself, this morning, William?"

"O yes. That's always the case. Why shouldn't I? This is a very pleasant world, if a man will but have sense enough to take his share of the good things of life, as they are going. But

I have called upon you on a particular business, Mrs. Leslie."

"You have?"

"Yes. And first, I want to know whether, in an affair of the heart—*h-hem!*—I can confide in you implicitly?"

The face of Mrs. Leslie brightened up.

"Confide in me? Of course you can," she replied, affecting a slightly offended air.

"Very well. Then I want to have a good long talk with you."

"But, surely, this isn't my young friend, William Archer? And are you really smitten with the bright eyes of some charming maiden? I am delighted to hear it."

"Hem! Not too fast, Mrs. Leslie. I can't exactly say that I am downright in love; for I don't think it is in me to love any one very deeply, except my humble self. But it strikes me, that I ought to begin to calculate the main chance—to look to the future. I am now twenty-seven, and have gone on at a pretty wild rate. Though I don't think I am quite so bad as some good sort of people are disposed to think me. They talk pretty hard of me, sometimes, don't they?"

Mrs. Leslie assumed a grave face, as became her, and replied,—

“It’s a fact, William; you are spoken of, pretty severely. But I have always taken your part. I knew there was good in you.”

“As there is in every one. Thank you—thank you, my friend. Well, as I was saying, I have been going on, for the last six or seven years, at a wild rate, and am beginning to fear that, if I don’t sober down a little, it will not be quite so good for me in the end. Now, how shall I sober down? that is the question?”

“Get a sweet little wife.”

“That’s just my own opinion. And here I want your advice. If I marry, it must be either for love or money. Or rather, my wife must be the loveliest woman to be found; or she must have some substantial virtues. One or the other of these is indispensable. And I will tell you why. Between you and myself, I have got nearly to the end of my rope. My father left me a fair property, but it’s pretty well all used up—in what way, it is now no good to mention. It is enough that it has taken to itself wings and flown away.”

“You surprise me, William!”

“It is true; and there is now no use of crying over it. My only wise course is, to make an effort to better my fortune. I have looked around for some time, and have, finally, selected

two young ladies, between whom my choice must lie. There are plenty to choose from ; but, some that I would like to be on very amiable terms with, seem inclined to give me the cold shoulder. One of the two, I have selected, I would prefer to the other. But, if she is not to be had, the other is ; at least I think so."

"Don't be too sanguine. But name your choice ; and then I can tell you better."

"I may count on your aid ?"

"Oh, certainly. You needn't doubt that for a moment. But, why do you think of anything beside a wife with money, if matters are becoming desperate with you ?"

"I have an old uncle, who is rich as a Jew."

"So you have."

"But, the old rascal has blown me up several times, for my free way of living. When he finds out that I have run through my patrimony, he will cut me off, I am afraid, without a dollar. But, if I have the sweet creature for a wife I have fixed my eyes upon, she will soften his heart right down, and take me, for her own dear sake, at once into his good graces. I know the old fellow's weakness."

"Ah ! That's your game ! You calculate with

coolness. Now tell me who this charming creature is. Am I acquainted with her?"

"Yes. Her name is Anna Lee. I first saw her in your house."

Mrs. Leslie looked grave.

"No chance for me, then?" inquired the young man.

"I'm afraid not."

"Is she engaged?"

"No. But she has just declined one of the best offers in the city—an offer favoured by her parents."

"She has? Who is the disappointed lover, pray?"

"Herbert Gardiner."

"Possible! Has he offered himself, and been refused?"

"Yes. And angry enough he is about it. I think the girl was a great fool;—indeed I know she was. But it's her own look out."

"There may be a chance for me, though, for all that."

"I should very much doubt it. And I'll tell you why. My opinion is, that she has heard something about Gardiner's habits, and has been silly enough to make that an objection, as if any young men were as pure as saints."

"Ho! ho!" laughed Archer.

"I imagine that here lies the gist of the whole matter. And, as report says a great deal more about you than it does about Gardiner, I should think your chance with the girl not worth speaking about."

"I don't like to think that. She is certainly a lovely creature. And now that she has sent Gardiner off, I should like, above all things, to make a conquest of her."

"It would be something of which to be proud. But, as I said before, I don't believe you have even the smallest chance of success. Who is the other young lady, on whom you have fixed your eye?"

"Florence Armitage."

"Ah! Her father is not so very wealthy."

"No, not so rich as Crœsus. Still he may be worth some forty or fifty thousand now, and is in the way of being worth three times as much in the next ten years. He is doing, at this time, so I have clearly ascertained, about the best business of any man in the city."

"I can't say that Florence is a favourite with me."

"Nor with me either. She lacks maidenly reserve, and that sensitiveness of feeling so beautiful

in a young woman. Do you know, that she once as good as asked me to take her to see Fanny Ellsler kick up her heels in a style that I shouldn't like my sister, if I had one, to witness?"

"You took her?"

"O yes; how could I help it? She was delighted, and called the Ellsler's dancing by all sorts of charming names; while I, who am pretty much of a sinner, and hard to put to the blush, felt half ashamed to look the girl in the face."

"Humph!"

"I can get her for the asking, I know. But I want to try Anna Lee. She is much more to be desired, portionless, even by me, than Florence is, with all her expectations."

"Your chance, I must again say, is a very poor one."

"Do you think it useless to try?"

"Almost. But, it is said, there is nothing like trying."

"Will you aid me?"

"All in my power. But she hasn't been to see me since her affair with Gardiner came to an issue; and I am not sure that she intends visiting me again."

"You must send for her. How soon are you

going to have another of your pleasant gatherings? Pretty soon?"

"I think so."

"How soon? I wish to strike while the iron is hot."

"In two or three weeks."

"Can't you say next week?"

"I don't know. Next week will be here very speedily."

"Can't you, just for my sake?"

"I like to be obliging, especially to my young friends. Perhaps I may be able to do so."

"Say you will."

"No, no, Mr. Impatience! I shall do no such thing. If all things conspire, I will have company next week. But don't forget the adage—'There is luck in leisure;' and that it is specially applicable in matters of this kind."

"I'll win her, as sure as my name is William Archer!" said the young man, his confidence increasing, the more he thought about Anna Lee.

"Don't be too certain. Anna has a cool head, as well as a warm heart."

"I know. But every young lady has her weak point, and I'll try hard to find out hers. Once certain of that, and I am safe."

CHAPTER X.

A SCHEME TO ENTRAP THE HEART OF ANNA LEE.

ABOUT a week after the interview between Mrs. Leslie and young Archer, as described in the last chapter, a note was left for Anna Lee, containing an invitation for her to spend an evening at the house of the former. "A few friends are to be present," was added to the note.

"What have you there?" asked Mrs. Lee, coming into Anna's room, about ten minutes after, and finding her daughter sitting in a thoughtful mood, with Mrs. Leslie's invitation in her hand.

Anna gave her mother the note. After reading it, she handed it back, and said with a smile—

"Mrs. Leslie is very kind, always to remember you when she has company."

"Yes."

This response was cold, and made in an equivocal tone. Anna said nothing more, and Mrs. Lee did not refer more particularly to the subject. On the day before the one to which the invitation had referred, Anna said to her mother—

"After thinking a good deal about it, I have made up my mind not to go to Mrs. Leslie's to-morrow, nor ever again."

"Have you a good reason?"

"Perhaps not one that I could make fully plain to everybody. But I think you can understand me. I don't *feel* right, when I think of going there."

"There must be *some* reasons for such a feeling."

"And there are. But even these reasons are so linked with feelings, that my mind cannot separate and give them distinctness."

"Freely state to me all your reasons and feelings," said the mother. "Perhaps, together, we can arrive at a distinct, rational conclusion."

"I have liked Mrs. Leslie, because she always seemed pleased to have me visit her, and showed me very kind attentions," Anna remarked. "But, at the same time, there has been something about her that I could not understand, and from which I have felt an involuntary shrinking. She is the intimate friend of Mr. Gardiner; and, I think, must be thoroughly acquainted with his character and habits. She may be a woman of sound principles; but my mind has many doubts. Any how, I do not wish to meet Mr. Gardiner, as I certainly shall, if I go to her house."

"And the invitation may only be intended to procure a meeting between you and that young man," suggested Mrs. Lee.

"I do not know."

"You say, that there was always something about Mrs. Leslie that repulsed you?"

"Yes. Something that seemed instantly to assault my purest and best feelings. I do not recollect, now I begin to think of it, that I ever heard her declare a high principle of action. I am sure I have heard very wrong sentiments uttered by young ladies, in her presence, to which she never opposed the truth. For all she had pleasant words. All she aimed to please. But is it good to be constantly flattered and favoured, and never opposed, even when thinking and speaking wrong? I do not believe so."

"Nor is it, Anna. No true-minded woman can listen to wrong sentiments from the lips of young ladies, without correcting them. She who fails to do so, is not just to her sex."

"So I have felt, whenever anything led me to think about the way in which Mrs. Leslie treats the many young persons who meet at her house."

"Does she talk to them often about their beaux?"

"O yes. It is almost her constant theme.

She is sure to have something to say about how much this or that one is pleased with you, every time you meet her. To me, she was constantly dropping something about Mr. Gardiner."

"And, no doubt, was at the bottom of his proposal to you."

"I have never thought that." And Anna looked up into her mother's face with surprise. "But it may be true."

"I now understand you fully;" Mrs. Lee said. "You are right in not wishing to go to her house again. I would not have you do so on any account. Such a woman is a young maiden's most dangerous friend. She should be shunned as carefully as you would shun an open enemy."

"I am glad you feel as I do about going to her house," returned Anna, seeming much relieved. "Between me and her, there is nothing really congenial. I take no pleasure in talking all the time about young men; and she seems to think there is no theme so interesting—nothing so pleasant to a maiden's ear."

There was a gay company at the house of Mrs. Leslie, on the next evening. But Anna was not there. Archer did not arrive till late. This was intended.

"Where is Miss Lee?" he asked, drawing Mrs.

Leslie aside, soon after he came in. "I don't see her here."

"No. She sent me a note declining the invitation."

"On what ground?"

"No ground at all. I read it as a flat refusal to accept my invitation."

"What did she say?"

"She thanked me for my kind courtesy, but begged, for reasons not necessary to explain, so she said, to be excused."

"Confound it all! It is too bad! Do you think she suspected the whole plan?"

"No. How should she?"

"I must and will see her."

"If you can."

"I'll call at her father's house."

"O, well. You can do that. She can't decline going there—or, rather, staying there. But, what good will it do you?"

"Faint heart never won fair lady."

"True. And a fair lady can usually be won, if the lover persevere."

"The very thing that I will do. I will break through the ice by calling upon her. I have met her often enough here to be authorized to do this."

"And after that?"

“Once let me get at the maiden’s ear, and I will try hard to charm it. In the first interview I have with her, I will sweep the whole circle of subjects likely to interest a lady; and when I have found the right one, I will play dexterously upon that string. Before leaving her I will succeed in effecting an engagement of some kind or other;—to go to church or opera; concert or exhibition. At a second meeting, I will talk of virtue and morality like any saint; and even venture to hint something about early errors long since repented of, and, I trust, forgiven by God and man. Don’t you think I will make my way into her confidence? After gaining a few of the outworks to the citadel of her heart, I will continue to approach with great caution; and be very careful not to strike foolishly, like Gardiner, before the iron is hot. You see, I understand what I am about.”

“Yes. But you have no ordinary person to deal with. Anna Lee will see through you at a glance, and act with a promptness such as you have not been used to meeting in young ladies. To me, she is almost too perfect—too free from weakness.”

“I’m sorry for that. I like your real women. But women-angels are a little above my comprehension. I don’t know how to take them.

Still, as I have set out, I shall go through the matter. There never was any back-out in me, and never shall be. I've come round as good as she is, in my time, and—"

"William!" And Mrs. Leslie raised her finger and affected a grave face.

The young man, who was about to venture, as Mrs. Leslie perceived, upon a boast of wickedness, became silent, but showed no confusion. He had not really offended the lady with whom he was conversing, that he could plainly see. She had only checked him for the sake of appearances; and this was just as apparent to his mind as it was to hers. In a moment he resumed, with a smile,

"I know I'm something of a bad boy; but you can forgive me, if other people can't. As I was saying, I never suffer myself to be foiled in anything I set my head about; and I shall not be foiled in this."

"We shall see."

"So we shall. And if I don't have this very coy and fastidious young lady completely caged before a month, my name isn't William Archer."

"Success to your adventure!"

"Thank you! You shall dance at my wedding, before six months."

"Not if you marry Anna Lee."

“Why?”

“She has thought fit to decline an invitation to my house, without alleging a reason. Such conduct from persons standing on my own level, I should not pass by; much less from one to whom I have stooped—from one whom I have been endeavouring to lift from her native obscurity. I feel no unkindness towards the girl; but self-respect will not permit me again to notice her.”

“Don’t talk so foolishly, Mrs. Leslie.”

“I mean just what I say, William. I shall not again notice the girl.”

“Suppose she makes an apology? Will that alter the face of things?”

“Certainly. That would restore former relations.”

“She shall do it!”

Mrs. Leslie smiled.

“She shall! In less than six weeks you will be on terms of the closest intimacy.”

In thus boasting of what he could and would accomplish, the young man was not, consciously, expending mere idle breath. Judging from his former success in winning his way into the favourable regard of young ladies, he believed that he would again be successful. He had much in his favour, so far as externals were concerned.

His person was attractive, his manners easy and fascinating, and his tastes cultivated. He had spent two years in Europe, and had come home with all the external advantages a residence on the continent gives to an intelligent mind, and all the moral defects it entails upon an impure one. In heart a villain, he could assume the air of a saint; and he was ready to do so at any moment that it suited his purpose.

Understanding the power of false appearances, and knowing how perfectly he could assume them, Archer did not entirely over estimate his ability to insinuate himself into the good feelings of young ladies. He had already succeeded in doing so, in more than one instance, even to the accomplishment of the most base and infamous purposes; for which he was execrated by many virtuous minds, and by none more deeply than by Anna Lee. At the same time, the melancholy truth must be told, that four-fifths of the entire number of those who were fully conversant with all the sad details of his base conduct, fathers, mothers and daughters, welcomed him to their houses, and associated with him as freely and as cordially as before; while the victims of his infernal passions were thrust out, cast down, trampled under foot, and consigned to . hopeless infamy! How the heart sickens at this

picture! Would that it were only an imaginary one! Would that the best society around us contained no William Archers, or that it had the healthy moral force to throw them out, as base and unworthy! But alas! it yet lacks this healthy action at the vitals. And this fact the **truly** pure and good ought never to forget.

But we will pass on, and see how far the young man Archer is successful in his efforts to woo and win the heart of a maiden, whose perceptions of moral qualities are so acute as those of Anna Lee.

CHAPTER XI.

CATCHING HUSBANDS.

ANNA LEE sat sewing one morning, a few days after she had declined going to Mrs. Leslie's, when Florence Armitage, gaily dressed, called in to see her. There were many things about Florence that pleased Anna, although she did not approve much that she did and said. Her mother was a weak woman, and her father was too much absorbed in business to pay attention to his family;

so that, between them, her home education had been very much neglected, and very badly managed as far as it went. Anna really pitied her for the defects of her character; and, whenever an opportunity occurred, strove to correct them.

"Come, Anna, put up your work," Florence said. "The day is too fine a one to be spent indoors. I have called on purpose to take you out."

"I am sorry to disappoint you, Florence," Anna returned, smiling, "but I cannot go out to-day."

"Yes you can, I know. What in the world is there to keep you at home?"

"A great deal. We have a large family; and that makes plenty of work. It's as much as mother and I can both do to keep the children's clothes in order, after we get one-half of them made by a seamstress."

"One-half? You don't pretend to make half of their clothes!"

"Yes. Why not, if we can?"

"Just for the reason that you ought not to make a slave of yourself."

"And I don't. I must be engaged, usefully, all the while, and nothing more useful offers. I should be very sorry, indeed, to sit down and fold

my hands in idleness, and put father to the expense of a seamstress in the house, for the whole year round. It would injure me, and be a burden to him. I am sure I should not be as happy as I now am, in the consciousness that I am doing only what I ought to do."

"You are a strange kind of a girl, Anna; and yet, I sometimes wish that I were just like you. But I ain't, and can't be, so there is no use in wishing. However, be that as it may, I want you to go out with me this lovely morning."

"Why are you so desirous to have my company?"

"Because I like you, I suppose, and want to have you share a delightful promenade."

"Where?"

"Oh, down Chestnut Street, of course."

"Why down Chestnut Street?"

"To meet the beaux."

"Florence!"

Anna looked at her young friend in surprise.

"Don't put on that grave face, Anna. What harm have I said? Is there anything wrong in walking out to look at the beaux? Haven't you done it yourself hundreds of times?"

"Me?" And the colour on the maiden's cheek

deepened to an indignant blush. "Me, Florence? No, never!"

"You haven't? What harm is there in it, pray?"

"How can you ask such a question, Florence?"

"Innocently enough, for I am perfectly unconscious of any wrong in the matter. I have walked out, hundreds of times, for no other purpose than to meet the beaux on the streets, and get a bow from this one, a smile from that one, and, perhaps, a very agreeable chat for a square or two, with another. It's delightful! And as to the harm, I think it will puzzle even you to point it out. So come, put up your work for this once, and go with me; I know you will enjoy it as much as I do."

Anna shook her head, and looked even more serious than before.

"Well, you are a strange creature, Miss Lee," Florence said. "And you won't go?"

"No—of course not."

"I know two girls that got husbands just by walking down Chestnut Street every day. There now! What do you think of that, my lady?"

"Why, Florence!" exclaimed Anna.

"It's true. Lizzy Glenn, who was married last week to Gaskill, met him first in the street. He

saw her one day, and was so much pleased with her appearance, that he followed her home to see who she was and where she lived. A day or two afterwards he met her again, and looked at her so hard that she noticed it. For nearly a week they met every day, she encouraging him by looks, until he ventured to bow to her. She returned the salutation. On the following day he not only spoke to, but joined her, and walked for two or three squares by her side. The next advance was to accompany her home. After that, things went on as pleasantly as could be wished, and in two months they were married. Everybody says it is an excellent match. Now wasn't that delightful! For my part, if I thought it would be my good luck to catch a husband so easily, I would walk Chestnut Street from Monday morning until Saturday night. Wouldn't you?"

"Husbands caught in that way, I should hardly think worth having," Anna gravely replied.

"Why not? Isn't Gaskill worth having?"

"I know nothing about him."

"I do then; and I only wish he had fancied me instead of Lizzy Glenn. I think I would have made him quite as good a wife."

"It pains me to hear you speak lightly on so

serious a matter, Florence," Anna returned.—
"Marriage is the last subject on which a maiden should trifle. If she think of it all, it should be
• with subdued and holy feelings. On no account should she be anxious for the duties and responsibilities of wedded life—on no account should she seek to attract attention. But, if sought by one whose principles she can approve, and with whose heart her own can beat responsively, then she should, with a calm, deep, woman's trust, give herself to him, and seek to become one with him. Only in such a union can she hope to be blessed. To desire any other is folly—to form any other is madness. Ah, my friend! if all women had so acted, there would not now be so many sad-hearted wives; and that there are many, many such, even we have been made painfully conscious."

The manner of Anna, and the tone of her voice, as well as her words, caused the feelings of Florence to change. Her character was not all perverted. There was yet enough of the woman in her, to feel that what her friend had said was true. She replied, in a quieter tone than any in which she had yet spoken,

"According to your idea, a young girl should keep out of the sight of young men as much as possible."

"She should not seek to attract their attention. This is all I mean."

"Then she ought never to go into company?"

"That does not follow. At a suitable age, let her go into company by all means. But while in company, let her be retiring and modest."

"And so get no attentions paid to her?"

"She may not receive the attentions of those who look no deeper than a gay dress and an imposing manner; but she will lose nothing by this. But, for me, I cannot conceive why a young girl should be anxious about having the attentions of young men."

"As to the *why*, I don't know that there is any great use in stopping to reason about it—the *fact* is indisputable. We *do* like to receive their attentions. Isn't it so?"

"I can only speak for myself," Anna replied. "For one, I neither think about, nor desire the attentions of young men, while in company. I do not object to them. They are, in fact, when made by the honourable-minded, pleasant to me."

"And you would be unhappy, if neglected?"

"No. I have been as happy while conversing a whole evening in a circle of ladies, as I have been when surrounded by gentlemen. Why should I not be?"

“You are not like any other girl I ever saw, Anna. I can’t make you out, altogether. If I didn’t know you as well as I do, I would say you had no heart. But I know you have, and a warm one too. Ah, me! I wish I could be just like you. And so you won’t put by your sewing and walk with me?”

“No, Florence; I cannot spare the time, for one thing—and for another, I could not walk out, unless I had a higher end in view than the one you are proposing to yourself. But suppose you lay off your things, and spend the morning with me.”

“No, thank you! I have come out for a walk on Chestnut Street, and I must have it. So, good-morning, dear, if I am not to have your good company.”

Florence rose, as she said this, and moved towards the door. The friends chatted a few minutes longer, standing, and then the visiter departed.

Going at once into Chestnut Street, Florence Armitage took her way slowly down. She had not gone far, before she met William Archer, who joined her. Although the young man had resolved to make a demonstration in another quarter, he thought it nothing more than a wise policy to maintain with Florence the best possible under-

standing ; so that, should he fail, as prophesied by his friend, Mrs. Leslie, in his attempts to win Anna Lee, he might have all things in such a fair train, that an offer could at once be made to Florence. As to the acceptance of that offer, he had no very serious doubts. On this occasion, he strolled about for an hour with Florence, made two or three calls with her, and then saw her to her own door.

On the evening of that day, Anna Lee sat reading to her father and mother, when one of the domestics came in, and said that a young gentleman was in the parlour, who wished to see her.

“Who is it?” asked Anna.

“He did not tell me his name,” replied the domestic.

The maiden cast her eyes to the floor, and thought for a moment ; then looking up, she said,

“Ask him to send up his name, Margaret.”

“Hadn’t you better go down, Anna? Perhaps it may be some friend, who will think you rude.” Mr. Lee remarked.

Anna thought again, and then replied—

“I would rather Margaret would get his name.”

“Go then, Margaret,” said Mr. Lee, who was beginning to feel a deeper respect for his daughter’s

perceptions of what was right in matters that concerned herself.

"Who can it be, I wonder?" the mother asked, half musingly.

Anna did not reply, but sat with her eyes upon the page of the book she had been reading. In a few moments the domestic returned, and handed her a card. Her cheek flushed the moment she saw the name upon it. With something of indignation in her voice, she said,—

"Say to him, Margaret, that I cannot see him."

"Who is it?" asked the father and mother at the same moment. Anna handed her father the card—

"William Archer!" he ejaculated, in surprise. "What brings him here?"

"He has asked for me," replied Anna; "but I cannot see him."

"Hadn't you, then, better let Margaret say that you will thank him to excuse you this evening?" returned Mrs. Lee. "That would be a milder way of refusing to see the young man."

"I would rather she would say to him, from me, that I cannot see him. That is just the truth, and I wish him to know it. I would not sit alone and talk with that young man for anything that could be given me." And the pure-hearted girl

shuddered with an instinctive feeling of horror at the thoughts of his character.

Nothing more was said, and the domestic conveyed to Archer Anna's precise words. The young man, half-prepared for some such answer, since his name had gone up, retired without a remark, or the evidence of a single emotion. But he was deeply chagrined, and felt angry and bitter towards Anna. A muttered threat of revenge passed his lips as he gained the pavement, and strode off at a rapid pace. But the sweet maiden was safe from all harm he might purpose against her in his evil heart. She was surrounded and defended by the sphere of her own innocence.

And were every maiden so surrounded and defended, every maiden would be as safe, though she were encompassed by a host of those who sought her ruin. Even the lion is said to become tame in the presence of a pure virgin. This is much more than a mere figure of speech.

CHAPTER XII.

AN ENGAGEMENT.

ON leaving the house of Mrs. Lee, young Archer went direct to his friend and confidant, Mrs. Leslie.

"I called on Miss Lee, this evening," he said, abruptly, as soon as he met that lady.

"Ah! Well, what was the result?"

"The huzzy wouldn't see me!"

"Hush, William! You mustn't speak in that way about young ladies."

"The girl, then; confound her!"

"What did she say?"

"I didn't tell my name to the servant, when I first went in, merely sending up word that a gentleman had called to see her. But I couldn't get the start of her in this way. She would have my name. So I sent up my card. In three minutes the servant came down, and said, 'Miss Anna says she cannot see you.' Humph! Wasn't that telling me to go about my business in the coolest way imaginable? But I'll be revenged

on her! I'll make her repent of this insult—see if I don't! and that before a dozen months are told."

"William! I won't hear you talk so," interposed Mrs. Leslie. "You certainly are forgetting yourself. If Anna didn't wish to see you, she had a right to say so."

"Yes: but—"

"Remember, William," added Mrs. Leslie, "that I told you success was doubtful, if you presented your suit in that quarter. Anna Lee has already refused Gardiner, as you know; and, if I am not mistaken in her reasons, on account of lighter objections than lie at your door."

"Pah! that's mere affectation. A young man is liked all the better for being a little gay. It shows that there is some spirit in him."

"Your doctrine, however true in the main, won't hold good in this case."

"I don't care. I'll be revenged on her. I'll humble her yet. I'll show the world that she isn't the angel she pretends to be."

"I tell you, William, that I will not permit you to speak before me, in this way!" The base threat of the base-hearted young man, awoke even Mrs. Leslie's sluggish sense of delicacy and right.

"Well, well! never mind!" he replied, in a

softened tone, conscious that he had said too much.

"I'll try and keep cool."

"Which will be a much more sensible thing."

"But shall I give up the pursuit?"

"Yes; by all means. No man who has any independent feelings could know, or wish to know, the individual who had refused to see him. There is Florence Armitage, who is to be had, as I know, for the asking. Take her; she will suit you a great deal better. Her tastes are not so refined, nor her sense of propriety so squeamish as are those of Miss Lee. And then, you know, she will have something more solid into the bargain. Depend upon it, she will make you a much more agreeable wife."

"Perhaps so. But in a *wife*, even I would prefer the delicate reserve of Anna Lee, to the free, forward, kiss-me-if-you-dare manner of Florence Armitage."

"Would you, indeed! You are nice in your distinctions."

"So I ought to be, when thinking of a wife. A man ought to reflect a little before he ties himself to a woman's apron string for life."

"You can't get Anna Lee, and you can get Florence Armitage; and you must, so you say, choose between them. What folly, then, to trifle

about it? Go forward, like a man, and take the latter; my word for it, you will never repent having done so."

Urged by his friend, Mrs. Leslie, and by the indignation he felt at the refusal of Anna to see him, Archer, in a few days, determined the question in favour of Florence. With her, he had no difficulty. Matters were soon on the most favourable footing. In about six weeks he offered himself, and was accepted without hesitation by the maiden. Her parents were not so easily reconciled. But a covert intimation that, if consent were not given, an elopement would inevitably take place, brought them to terms. Had they known the real truth, that the young man had actually wasted, in dissipation and gaming, the whole of his property, they would, even then, not have yielded. But this they did not suspect.

After these preliminaries were settled, much to the delight of Florence, an early day was named for the marriage, and all the preparations for the happy event begun.

CHAPTER XIII.

A NEW LOVER.

THE reader will remember that mention has once or twice been made of a young man named Hartley.

A few years previous to the opening of our story, James Hartley came to Philadelphia as a poor boy, and obtained, through the recommendation of a friend who knew his family, a situation in a wholesale mercantile house. His honesty, industry and intelligence, soon made him valuable to his employers, who, as he advanced in years, elevated him in their confidence step by step, until, long before he had reached the age of twenty-one, he occupied the position of their chief and confidential clerk. Never, in the slightest degree, did he betray their confidence, or trespass with undue familiarity upon their frankness, and the open, generous manner in which they always treated him. When he became of age, so highly was he esteemed and valued, that he was offered a share in the business, and became one of

the firm of R——, S—— & Co., and entitled to a moderate dividend on the profits.

During his minority, the young man had devoted himself so closely to business, and given to it so much of his thoughts, that he had neglected to adorn his mind by tasteful reading, and to furnish himself with stores of general information. On entering into company, at a pretty early age, he became aware of his deficiencies in this respect, and to make up for them as rapidly as possible, he spent most of his evenings in reading and study. Naturally modest and disposed to think more of his deficiencies than of his attainments, he was retiring in company, and, therefore, attracted but little attention. He was not much of a favourite with young ladies, because he did not pay them very marked or flattering attentions. This was not the result of intention, but arose from want of that confidence in himself, which would have pushed him forward and made him an agreeable companion to all. As he gradually became better and better acquainted with the different ladies in whose society he was thrown, some liked him, and, indeed, highly esteemed him, while others thought him a dull companion. He had never learned to dance, and this tended to keep him back, and to prevent his circle of acquaintance from enlarging ;

for while most of the young girls were on the floor, threading the mazes of the graceful cotillion, he was in some corner, in grave conversation with their mothers, or entertaining some neglected maiden, whom no one thought it worth while to take as a partner.

From these causes, as just said, he was not a general favourite with young ladies. Their opinions in regard to him were various. Some thought him dull and stupid; while others, with whom he had conversed more freely, considered him sensible enough, but too puritanical in his views and feelings; others again said that they thought they could like him very well, but that they never could get near him.

Upon the whole, although no one could allege any moral defect against Hartley, there were very few of the younger members of the social circle who cared to be very gracious towards him, or who did not feel under constraint when by his side.

Anna Lee first met him, after he had been going into company for a year or two. He was then a member of the house in which he had served his time. From the moment he saw her Hartley liked Anna; but she was so general a favourite, that it was a rare thing, indeed, that he could get by her side; and when he did, she

always showed a reserve that, acting upon his feelings, already prepossessed in her favour, closed up his mental perceptions, and caused him to appear to very poor advantage. Of this he was clearly conscious.

From the first he had found no difficulty in making the acquaintance of Florence Armitage. She fluttered through the whole circle of young men, and had a word with all. Her policy, as well as her feelings, caused her, to use her own words on a certain occasion, to make herself agreeable to the beaux. Her frank, easy manner pleased Hartley at first. She was kinder and more affable towards him than any young lady he had met, and often came to his aid in company, when, from backwardness, he was losing all of its true enjoyment. For a time, Hartley liked Florence very well. But a close observation of her character, revealed in it very glaring defects. Her efforts to induce him to ask her to go to the theatre when Fanny Ellsler danced, efforts that could not be misunderstood, first took the scales from his eyes. When he heard that she had been seen there in company with Archer, whose principles and conduct he utterly detested, he shrunk from her instinctively. When he met her, he treated her

with politeness, but took no pleasure in her company.

Gradually, as he met Anna Lee again and again in company, Hartley saw more and more of the beautiful order and purity of her character. From pleasure experienced in the observation of these, admiration soon arose in his mind; and this, imperceptibly, as one moral beauty after another unfolded itself to his eyes, deepened into a feeling of earnest regard. At this time, he was concerned to observe that Herbert Gardiner, whom he well knew, was beginning to be very marked in his attentions towards Anna; and he was still more concerned to see that his attentions were not apparently disagreeable.

Coolly, and with more philosophy than is ordinarily to be found in young men, Hartley held himself aloof, and looked on to see the result.

"What a fool!" he heard a young friend say, as he came up and joined a group of acquaintances who were standing at the entrance of a neighbour's store, one day not long after he had marked the advances of Gardiner.

"Who's a fool?" he asked.

"Why, that pretty daughter of Lee's."

"What Lee?"

"President of ——— Insurance Company."

"Pray what has she been doing?"

"A silly thing that she will repent of before she dies," was the reply of one. "She has given our friend Gardiner, across the street, the mitten to hold."

"What!"

"It is said she has declined an offer, made her by Herbert Gardiner. What do you think of that? Isn't she particular? No doubt she will take a drayman before she dies, and be glad to get him."

"Why did she decline him?"

"Some girlish whim, I suppose. Or, perhaps, some apprentice boy has already stolen away her heart."

"She didn't like his character, it is said," remarked one.

"What does she know about that, I wonder?" returned another.

"No, it wasn't that," was added by a third. "I am told that she pretended to have a perception of his moral quality when he came near her, which she pronounced impure."

"Not far out of the way," smilingly replied Hartley.

"It's coming to a pretty pass, I think," said the other, "when young girls set themselves up to pronounce upon the quality of young men's -"

als, merely by the impression their sphere, as I believe it is called, makes upon her. A man might as well have a window in his breast."

"All fal-lal!" ejaculated one of the party, turning on his heel, and going off.

The little group separated at this, and Hartley went to his own store. The fact he had heard thrilled him with pleasure, and gave to Anna Lee, in his mind, a far more elevated position than she had before held.

About a month afterwards, during which time he had not once met Anna, he heard of her refusal to receive a call from Archer. Various reasons were assigned for this, but he was very sure that he understood the true one.

"Noble girl!" he said to himself. "Oh, that every honest woman would stamp, as you have done, the seal of displeasure upon vice!"

Firm and consistent in his own conduct, and ever acting from principles of right, settled as truths in his own rational mind, James Hartley was an admirer in all of firmness and consistency; but how much more an admirer of them in one whom his heart had already begun to love! Gardiner out of the way—and Archer's visit declined, he began to ~~think~~ of approaching, with serious intent, the lovely maiden himself. But, no sooner did

he begin thus to think, than doubts arose in his mind. His own person was plain, and Anna had declined an offer from one who was generally admitted to be one of the most fascinating and noble-looking young men in the city. He had not, as some others, who would seek her favour, those graces of mind which are so beautiful and attractive. He possessed not riches, although he was well connected in business. His family was obscure; in fact, unknown in the city. He was, himself, modest and retiring, and could not go forward and extort attention, as many had the power of doing.

These thoughts made him sad with feelings of doubt and discouragement.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN IMPRESSION MADE.

It must not be supposed that Anna Lee could take the virtuous stand she did in regard to young Archer, without feeling some disturbance of mind. She was not perfect—far from it—she was only in the effort to become so. She was only striving to act from what she saw to be true principles.

In this case, she believed that to receive the visits of a man like William Archer—a man who had been guilty of inflicting upon more than one of her sex, the deepest possible wrong—a wrong irreparable either in this or the next world, would be nothing more than approving and encouraging that wrong. And this she could not in conscience do. She, therefore, firmly repulsed him. Oh, that every virtuous maiden would thus turn from the man who has been the wronger of her sex, let him approach her when and where he will—in the social circle, in the crowded drawing-room, or in the public street! She need not do this with a parade that attracts attention—but only shrink from him as the sensitive plant shrinks from an approaching hand. She is neither true to herself nor her sex if she does not do so. For one, the writer of this always suspects the purity of heart of that woman who countenances or receives the attentions of a man who is known as the betrayer of her sex!

“Have I not done right, father?” Anna said, looking up earnestly into her father’s face, as soon as the street door had been heard to close heavily behind the disappointed and mortified young man.

“Yes, dear, perfectly right,” replied Mr. Lee.

Anna’s eyes fell again upon the page of the book

she held in her hand. Neither her father nor mother made any further remark; and she, after sitting silent for some time, resumed her pleasant task of reading aloud to them. But her voice was neither so clear nor calm as it had been. It was slightly tremulous and husky. She read on, for half an hour, and then shut the book, and left the room. Ascending to her own chamber, and closing the door after her, she sunk upon her knees at the bedside, and lifted up her heart in earnest prayer to be guided aright in all the relations of life; and to be endowed with firmness to act truly her part as a woman.

The incident that had just transpired, and the position she had felt it to be her duty to take, had disturbed her feelings. But now she felt calmer, and more clearly conscious that she had acted right.

The fact that Anna had refused to see, even in her own house, the young man who had called upon her, soon became known and talked about. A few silently approved her conduct; but many openly censured her, and some even permitted themselves to draw inferences from the fact, that reflected upon the purity of her character. Of all this, however, she was ignorant. She appeared, as usual, in company, but there was a change in

the conduct of young men towards her—that is, of a certain class of young men. Those who led an evil life, kept to some extent aloof. They feared to approach her with familiarity, lest they, too, should be made to feel that they were unworthy.

From this reason, although she was still the cynosure of every eye, many a gay flutterer, who had before flitted around her, kept at a distance, lest his wings should be melted by a too near approach. All this favoured our friend Hartley. Anna was more accessible to him in company, for she was not so frequently, as before, the partner of some gay friend.

The more intimately Anna knew Hartley, the more she thought about him. There was something, to her eye, beautiful in the honest simplicity of his mind, and attractive in the moral strength of his character. At first he had seemed a common man. She had responded to his attentions, whenever she was thrown into his company, because she was kind to all who were worthy of kindness; but as she met him oftener, knew him better, and marked the orderly character of his mind, and the healthy tone of his sentiments, she could not but admire him. And when he ventured to call to see her at her father's house, she

received his visit with pleasure, although she had not the most distant suspicion that his call was anything more than a friendly visit.

After he had gone away, Anna sunk down upon the sofa, in the parlour, alone, and fell into a dreamy, musing state of mind. Many images, dim and but half defined, floated before her; and mingled with them was the form of young Hartley. She heard the sound of his voice, and remembered many sentiments he had uttered. And all this was pleasing to her.

The young man trode the pavement, as he walked homeward, with light footsteps, and a lighter heart. Anna had not refused to see him. And more than that: She had sung and played for him—the music sounding sweeter to his ears than anything he had ever heard—and seemed interested in all the conversation that passed between them.

In a week Hartley called again. But this visit was far from being as pleasant as the first. Anna seemed reserved. What could it mean? Had she suspected his feelings? And did she mean to repulse him? The thought embarrassed him, and made their intercourse, during the hour that he stayed, unsatisfactory to both.

The young man did not venture upon a third visit. He was afraid. The coldness of Anna, it

was evident to his mind, arose from a dislike towards him, and he shrunk from the direct issue of an open repulse.

Two months passed, and not once during that time had Hartley ventured to call upon the maiden who was in all his waking and dreaming thoughts. Two or three times he had met her upon the street, and, although she had spoken to him, there was something shy about her—something altogether unusual in her manner. He interpreted it to mean a dislike for him; but he was a young man, and little acquainted with the language of a woman's heart.

CHAPTER XV.

A SAD PICTURE.

WHEN it became known to Anna Lee, that her young friend, Florence, had accepted an offer of marriage from Archer, her heart was deeply troubled. When they met, and Florence delicately unfolded the truth to her, the words Anna spoke in reply seemed as if they would choke her. She could not utter congratulations, and she felt

that she had now no right to object to the young man's character. Florence was his betrothed.

"I have a particular favour to ask of you, Anna," said her friend; "and I am sure you will not refuse me."

"What is it?"

"You will be one of my bridesmaids?"

Anna's eyes fell to the floor. How could she refuse her friend's request? and yet, how could she grant it? After thinking, hurriedly, for a few moments, and becoming sensible how intimately such a service to her friend would bring her into contact with a man from whom she shrunk with abhorrence, and who could not but feel angry with her, she looked up and said,

"I am sorry to refuse you, Florence, but it will be out of the question. I cannot act as your bridesmaid."

"Why?"

Anna was again silent. What could she say?

"You must, Anna; indeed you must," urged Florence.

"No, my friend, I cannot do this," was the maiden's firm answer.

"It is because you don't like William," said Florence, a little warmly, her cheek reddening.

Anna did not reply.

"Speak out the plain truth, and name at once your reason. Isn't it as I say?"

"Suppose that were the reason, Florence, why should you wish to know it?"

"Because I do." Florence was losing command of herself.

"My dear friend," said Anna, with earnestness, "do not let a little thing like this cause you to feel unkindly towards one who has a warm affection for you; towards one who would willingly serve you in every possible way."

"It is not impossible for you to do what I have asked." Florence looked into Anna's face with compressed lips, as she made this reply.

"It is impossible for me to do anything that I think wrong."

"Wrong! Wrong to be my bridemaids!" And Florence rose to her feet with a flushed face.

"What do you mean by such words?"

"Enough has been already said, Florence," returned the maiden, with the tears starting to her eyes. "I do not wish to give you a reason for declining your request. Believe me that it does not arise from any indisposition to serve you."

"It is because you do not like Mr. Archer, then?"

Anna made no reply.

"Anna, I must and will have the truth! Tell me at once if that is your reason?" Florence spoke in an agitated manner.

"I cannot withhold my reason, if you insist upon knowing it."

"I do insist."

"You have supposed truly."

"You don't like Mr. Archer."

"No, Florence, I don't. This you have always known. And it is for this reason that I am compelled to refuse your request."

"How can you be my friend, and not the friend of my husband?" Florence had a stern look, as she asked this question, and then moved towards the door.

"It must be as you say, Florence," was Anna's calm reply, although the tears were stealing from beneath her half-closed lashes. "I wish to be *your* friend—I love you as a sister; or, rather, let me say, as a wayward sister, whom I would fain lead by better counsels than those she is following. The man you are about to marry, you well know, I do not like, and that I have good reasons for my feeling. I do not think he will ever make you happy. I wish, from my heart, you had declined his offer."

The exceeding tenderness of Anna's voice, as it pronounced the words "sister," and "wayward sister," caused the heart of Florence to tremble. Her momentarily excited anger subsided. She looked at the sweet, anxious face of her friend, and at the tears that were glistening on her cheeks. The appeal to all that was of the woman in her was too strong, and she rushed into the arms of Anna, and sank sobbing upon her bosom.

"O, my dear, good friend!" she murmured, as soon as her emotion had in some degree subsided. "I wish that I had your firm heart that beats so truly and warmly in the right place. I wish that, like you, I were free from weakness. That I could always do what my judgment dictates. I was angry with you but a moment since; no—no—Florence was not angry, it was her pride that was angry. She loves you as truly and as tenderly as she has ever loved you; and may that love never grow cold! But can you, will you still love me, and seek to guide my young heart as you have hitherto sought, but with so little apparent effect? I shall need your counsel—I shall need just such a friend. For in all soberness, Anna, I do not feel that I have done right in accepting an offer of marriage from William Archer. I do not believe that he will ever make me happy."

Anna shuddered, when her friend said this in a voice that was sadder than anything she had for a long time heard.

“O Florence!” And now Anna’s tears gushed freely. “Why did you not pause and think before you took this fatal step? Why did you not pray to Heaven for direction, before you spoke that one little word that involves the happiness and misery of a whole lifetime—nay, my dear friend, of a whole eternity?”

“Because I was mad. But is not this worse than madness, Anna? I have consented to become his bride. The day is appointed, and, before three weeks have passed away, I shall be a wife. I dare not say a happy wife. But I must strive to be all to him that a wife should be.”

“That is your duty, Florence. And if you will only strive to do a wife’s part, looking up for assistance in all your duties, and for guidance in every trying circumstance, your marriage with William Archer, although in the nature of things it cannot, at first, be a very happy one, may be the means of elevating and perfecting your character. And still more, of elevating and refining the character of your husband. Although the ordeal may be to you a fiery one, it may prove in

the hands of Providence the means of accomplishing a great good."

"God grant that it may be so," murmured Florence.

A responsive "Amen," was all the sound that broke upon the air, and then a deep, deep silence followed.

From that time, Florence Armitage was a changed being. She had felt all she had expressed to Anna, over and over again, in the short space that had elapsed since her engagement to Archer: but the expression of her feelings gave them a fixedness and power. They now influenced her external acts, and were seen in the change wrought in her countenance and manner. Her observation had become more acute, and her feelings more truly impressible. She saw more distinctly than she had before seen, the true character of Archer, and how little there was in it for a woman to love. She saw that he was selfish, had a violent temper, and was willing to sacrifice anything so that his own wishes might be gratified.

But what could she do? She had consented to become his wife. Had entered into a solemn contract with him, and she felt that she dared not violate it.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN EXCITING CIRCUMSTANCE.

DURING the next three weeks, Florence was unhappy. She dreaded, almost like the approach of death, her wedding-day. The more intimate she became in her association with the man she had promised to marry, the stronger was her repugnance to the union. She was much with Anna during that time, who strove all that was in her power, to cause her friend to look up for light. Anna did not feel that she ought to encourage Florence to break her contract with Archer. Had she done so, Florence would not long have hesitated; for she did not as yet see principles of action clearly in the light of her own mind, and therefore was easily led by others, when their advice favoured her own inclinations.

Archer himself saw that Florence was changed, and he half suspected the cause. This made him more attentive, and more careful to study the inclinations of his betrothed. But enough of his real character was constantly showing itself, to

sadden the heart of Florence, at the thought of becoming his bride. The recollection, too, of a young school-mate, to whom she had been attached, and who had been drawn from the path of virtue two years before, by Archer, and banished from virtuous society, was constantly in her mind. All through the day the image of that sweet-faced girl would be before her; and she would often dream of her at night.

By the time her wedding-day arrived, she had, instead of a pure love, a deep aversion for the man she had consented to marry. Nevertheless, all the preparations went on. A large company was invited to grace the nuptial ceremonies, and they assembled at the house of Mr. Armitage according to appointment. Anna Lee, though still firmly declining to act as one of the bridesmaids, was with her friend in her chamber as the hour approached, assisting to dress her for the occasion.

Poor Florence felt wretched. But there seemed no way of escape. She had accepted the young man's offer. There had been a solemn contract, and she did not see how she could break it; particularly, as she knew just as much of the young man's character, as a betrayer of innocence, before, as since, she had agreed to marry him.

All the preparations were completed, and in

half an hour Florence would have to stand at the marriage altar, and pledge her faith to a man for whom she felt a strong internal repugnance—to a man who could not make her happy. She desired to be left alone with Anna during the time that remained, and all retired from her chamber but the true-hearted maiden. For ten minutes not a word was spoken by either. Then the silence was broken by a violent fit of weeping. Florence was not able to control her feelings.

Anna tenderly soothed and encouraged her, until she grew externally calm.

“Ah, my dear friend!” said Florence, when she could trust herself to speak, “you cannot know the dreadful feelings I have. I think I could meet death with calmness; but from this union I shrink with a most intolerable anguish of mind. Last night I dreamed, for, it seems, the twentieth time, that Grace Leary came to see me—you remember sweet little Grace. I thought I was sitting just here, and she opened that door, and came in with a quiet step. She had on a gay dress, much worn and soiled, and a bonnet full of bright flowers, that were drooping and faded. All her beauty was gone; and, instead of the soft light of her sweet blue eyes, that we all used so to admire, her glance had in it a fierce,

demoniac fire. She came close up to me, and stood and looked me fixedly in the face. I could neither move nor speak. Gradually the whole expression of her face changed. Her eyes grew mild as heaven's soft azure, her cheeks rounded into the contour of health, and the rose blushed in them. The tawdry finery in which she was dressed changed into garments of snowy white, and she stood smiling upon me, the lovely Grace Leary of other days! I started forward to embrace her, but she stepped back, changed instantly to her former appearance; and pointing to a corner of the room, said sternly—

“ ‘For this, *he* is guilty!’ ”

“I looked, and there stood William Archer. I was wide awake in an instant. Oh, Anna! where, and what is Grace Leary now? The man I am about to marry, betrayed her; and she is, if still alive, a wretched outcast. That dream I feel to be true—alas! too true! And may it not be sent as a warning? Is it not the voice of Heaven, calling upon me to pause? Oh, if I could only think so, I would stop even here, and start back, from what seems inevitable ruin. There is nothing that I would not do, rather than advance a single step further. Anna! dear Anna! You

are wiser and better than I am ; tell me what I should do."

Before Anna Lee could frame her thoughts into a reply, the door opened, and a stranger, closely veiled, came in, and advanced towards the two young friends. Both rose to their feet, in instant surprise. The intruder was small in stature, and delicately formed. Her dress was of rich material, but much defaced ; and her whole appearance that of one who had experienced some sad change of fortune. For nearly a minute she stood before the astonished inmates of the room, with her head bent towards the floor, and her breast labouring heavily. At last she slowly drew aside the thick veil that concealed her face. It was a young, young face, but sadly marred. There was a broad white brow, and a pair of deep blue eyes, sunken far back in their sockets—delicately-formed lips, and, indeed, a whole countenance of the softest feminine mould. But the face was pale and sad, and had upon it many a line, not written there by Virtue's finger.

"You do not know me," the stranger said, in a low, tremulous voice, breaking the oppressive silence.

That voice stirred a thousand old memories in the hearts of both Florence and Anna.

"It is no wonder," she added, in a sadder tone, "I have changed since we played together as children."

"Grace! Grace Leary! Can it be possible!" exclaimed Anna, starting forward. But the stranger shrunk away, saying,

"No—no—Anna Lee: I will not let your pure hand touch one so polluted as mine. I have come here to perform one good act, among my thousand evil ones. This is the wedding-night of Florence Armitage. I have dreamed of her for weeks past; and now, impelled by something I cannot resist, I have come to warn her against the man to whom she is about to be united. He lured me, with false promises of marriage, from the path of virtue, and then corrupted me more and more, and pressed me down lower and lower, until I am what you see, one of society's vilest outcasts."

"Florence!" and she fixed her eyes upon the young creature who stood trembling before her, all decked out in her bridal robes—"Pause—think—start back! If you advance a single step, you will be wretched for life. I have a right to know the man you are about to marry,—I do know him, far better than you possibly can; and I know him to be corrupt, debased, unprinci-

pled. I hold his promise of marriage ; a promise by which he enticed me from the right path ; and while that promise stands, he has no right to wed another. He can never be truly your husband, while he is pledged to me."

At that moment the door again opened, and Archer himself, accompanied by the mother of Anna, and the bridemaids, entered. It was the hour for the ceremony to begin.

"Aha!" half shrieked the wretched creature as her eyes fell upon the young man himself who stepped back in amazement and alarm. Then raising her finger, and stretching up her slender form to its utmost height, she said, in a calm, clear voice—

"Base betrayer of innocence! Behold one of your victims! There is an unmarked grave, in a lonely spot near the city. Do you know who sleeps there? Flora Lyons!" This name was uttered mournfully ; at its sound, both Anna and Florence started, and grew pale. The excited girl went on,—“I was with her on the night in which she died—alone with her. Oh, it was a dreadful night! She cursed you with her latest breath, and well she might—you were her murderer—yes, worse than her murderer ; for you killed both body and soul. And now, after all this, the wolf

is seeking to consort with the lamb. But it shall not be!"

The strong excitement of the girl's feelings overcame her. As she uttered the last words, her extended arm fell, her head drooped upon her bosom, and she would have fallen forward upon the floor, had not the mother of Florence caught her in her arms. When the confusion that followed had subsided, William Archer was not to be seen. He had left the room and the house.

"Thank God! I am saved," murmured Florence, as soon as her bewildered mind grew calm, throwing her arms round the neck of Anna as she spoke. They were again alone, after having seen poor Grace Leary, still insensible, laid in bed, and properly attended to.

"Yes, my dear Florence! you are safe. And may the Being you have so fervently thanked for his kind, preserving care, keep you ever under the shadow of His wings. Look up to Him, and you need fear no danger. He will be a light to your feet, and guide you safely through the most dark and difficult parts of life's journey."

"I will look to Him—I will trust in him," murmured the thankful girl, drawing her arm tightly about the neck of her friend.

Of the surprise and confusion that took place

when it was announced to the company that the wedding would not take place, nothing need be said. Of course there was much embarrassment — many exclamations, and a hundred and one conjectures as to the real cause. All was in due time explained and understood; and all felt glad that Florence had escaped a life of wretchedness.

CHAPTER XVII.

WOODED AND WON.

A FEW evenings after the events which transpired at the house of Mr. Armitage, as just described, had taken place, Hartley, who could not erase the image of Anna Lee from his mind, determined, in a moment of half-desperation, to call upon her once more.

“If she dislikes me, I will see it, and I want some certainty,” he said to himself.

Under this feeling, he visited her.

“Mr. Hartley is in the parlour,” said a domestic, as she opened the door of the room where Anna was sitting with her parents.

Mr. Lee looked into the face of his daughter, and saw that the announcement had disturbed the quiet tone of her feelings. But whether the effect were pleasing, or otherwise, he could not tell.

“Tell him I will be down in a few minutes,” Anna said, rising. She took a light and went to her own room, where she re-arranged her hair, put on a collar, and made some trifling alterations in her dress. She lingered a few minutes after this, to give her feelings, that were more than ordinarily ruffled, time to calm down. Then she descended to the parlour.

Hartley had been waiting for her in a state of nervous uncertainty. Upon the character of her reception of his visit, hung all his hopes. If she smiled upon him, he would be the happiest man in existence; if she repulsed him by her manner, he would be the most miserable. He was in this state of mind, when Anna came in, and advancing towards him, offered her hand with a graceful ease, and a manner so frank and warm, that the young man took instant courage. In a little while they were conversing together, perfectly at ease, and each interested in and silently approving the sentiments uttered by the other. When they separated, both felt happier than they had been for weeks. Why it was so

with Anna, she hardly dared acknowledge to herself. To Hartley, as far as he was concerned, the matter was plain as daylight. He did not suffer many days to elapse, before calling again. To his great delight, he was received as kindly as before; and even half-blind as he was from over modesty and bashfulness, could see that there was something warmer in the face and eyes of the maiden, than expressed an ordinary friendly feeling towards an acquaintance. He now visited Anna regularly, and was ever a welcome guest.

On one occasion, after Hartley had paid close attention to her for two or three months, there was a freer exchange of sentiments, and the conversation was upon subjects that brought out from both an expression of the leading principles that ought to govern in the common affairs of life. Hartley was pleased to find that Anna had sound views upon all the questions that came up; and she was no less gratified to perceive in him, as she had often before perceived, a basis of good sense, a clearly discriminating mind, and a love of truth for its own sake. They had been speaking of the beauty of moral excellence, when Anna remarked, and she did so to see how far his principles led him,—

"But to come to the real truth at last, Mr. Hartley, moral excellence is nothing, if the seal of religion be wanting."

Hartley looked at the maiden, but did not reply.

"In fact," she resumed, "unless all our actions are regulated by Divine laws, our morality has but a slender base to stand upon—is, in fact, only an assumed and not a real morality, and when the storms of temptations arise, and the floods beat against it, it will fall."

He still remained a silent, but admiring listener; and she went on.

"A man may render civil obligations to his country, because his interest is involved in doing so; and he may act in all the varied relations of life with external faultlessness, and yet not be in heart a moral man, or a good citizen. He may obey the laws, because he thereby secures his own good; and he may be hospitable and kind, and generous from a love of the world's good opinion. But, if he could believe that it would be more to his interest to violate the law, what would hold him in obedience to the law? Or, if he were placed in circumstances where he could not forfeit or gain the world's good opinion, would he be generous and hospitable? But, if he is a good citizen, and a moral man from a reli-

gious principle—that is, because civil laws and moral laws are at the same time Divine laws, can even he be tempted to break them? No. He only, therefore, who is governed by religious principles, is, in reality a good citizen, or a truly moral man. Is it not so, Mr. Hartley?”

“Doubtless, all you have said is true,” returned the young man. “But who around us is thus governed by religious principles?”

“Many, I hope.”

“Can you name one?”

The maiden’s cheek became slightly suffused, as she replied, after a moment’s hesitation,

“Yes; one, at least.”

“Who is it?”

“My father. And it is to him I am indebted for the light that my own mind has received on so important a subject.”

“Do you not know another?”

“I do. My mother acts from the same high obligations.”

“And you do the same?”

Hartley looked earnestly into his companion’s face, as he said this, that not a single varying shade of its expression might be lost.

“I try to do so,” was the modestly spoken answer; “but I am conscious, every day, that my

efforts are altogether imperfect. That my character is not yet based upon an ever-abiding love of the truth for its own sake."

"I am glad to hear you say so," Hartley returned, with a smile.

"Glad?" And Anna looked at the young man with surprise.

"Yes, glad. Like you, I am struggling to make the laws of moral and civil life, one with the laws of Divine order; but my efforts are imperfect, and my progress very slow. Sometimes I seem not to advance at all. Is not that your own experience?"

"It is; and I sometimes fear will ever be. If I advance at all, my progress is so slow that I do not perceive it. But why should you be glad at my imperfections?"

Hartley ventured to take her hand. She yielded it passively. Looking steadily into her mild, blue eyes, he said,—

"Because I feared that you were perfect; and if so, I should have been without hope."

The eyes of the maiden fell suddenly. A burning blush covered her whole face, yet she did not withdraw the hand that was held by her companion.

“But, like myself, you are conscious of imperfections—conscious of weakness and evil, and, like myself, are struggling to rise above them,” continued Hartley, tightening his hold upon the small, soft hand, that lay so passively in his. “Shall we not help each other to rise into a higher and better life? Shall we not, together, struggle with temptation, and together find a Sabbath rest, when we have conquered?”

Anna could not reply. But her heart was fluttering with joy. She could only let her hand remain in that of her lover; and she did let it remain, and even returned his tight clasp with a gentle pressure.

When Hartley passed from the door of Mr. Lee's dwelling, he was bewilderingly happy. Anna had consented, with her parent's approbation, to accept his hand in marriage.

CHAPTER XVIII.

YOUTH AND BEAUTY IN RUINS.

DURING the time that James Hartley was visiting Anna, Mr. Lee had made very close inquiries into his character and habits of life. All that he heard was favourable. At first, even with those favourable testimonials in regard to the young man, Mr. Lee did not feel satisfied altogether, with his attentions to Anna. As the reader has seen, with all his good sense, the father had his weaknesses. He was proud of his lovely child, and could not help wishing to see her the chosen bride, when chosen at all, of one who stood forth from the mass, distinguished in some way; either as a man of wealth and rank, or with a brilliant reputation in some profession.

But the lesson he had received in the case of Gardiner was a salutary one—it rebuked his fond pride, and made him willing to consent for Anna to wed even obscurely, so that in the man of her choice, both the heart and the head were right.

When, therefore, Hartley made a formal proposal for the hand of Anna, Mr. Lee gave his free

consent, although he could not help a feeling of reluctance in doing so. To Hartley he could find no valid objection; only, he was an ordinary man, in the common walks of life.

From the time of the engagement until the wedding-day, nothing of interest to the reader transpired. The more frequently Anna saw, and the better she knew her betrothed, the more thankful did she feel that her young heart had been won by a man of such pure and high principles. By one who could not only see what was true, but who had the strength of mind to act ever according to its dictates. Mr. Lee also esteemed the young man more and more, the oftener he met him, and the more closely he scrutinized his character; and long before the wedding-day arrived, his heart consented to the union as freely as did his head—his will approved as well as his understanding.

After the exciting occurrence which took place at the house of Mr. Armitage, Florence was a very different being from what she was before. She had stood, frightened, on the brink of a terrible precipice, just ready to plunge into the awful abyss below, and had been saved at the moment when hope was pluming her wings to depart. She went abroad but rarely, and when in com-

pany, was modest and retiring. A large portion of her time was spent with Anna, from whose precepts and example she learned to think and feel more as one just entering upon the untried and unknown scenes of life should think and feel. She learned to think of marriage more justly ; to esteem it the most important act of a woman's life, and as involving the most important results.

Like Anna's father, Florence did not at first feel reconciled to the choice she had made. But the oftener she met Hartley, and the more closely she compared him with the newer and truer standards that were forming in her mind, the more fully did she become satisfied that Anna had chosen with a wise discrimination.

To the unfortunate being who had, in the wild anguish of a wounded and crushed spirit, stepped forward from her guilty obscurity, and saved her from the ruin of all life's best hopes, Florence felt deeply grateful. After the over-excited feelings of Grace Leary had suddenly subsided in unconsciousness, she was removed to another chamber, placed in bed, and every effort made to restore her to animation. It was sad to look upon the white, sunken face of the death-like sleeper, and to think of all she had suffered—of the vine-wreathed bower of virtue that she had forsaken, for

the vile haunts of sin and deep pollution. Towards her betrayer, there was but one feeling—that of the deepest execration. Many hours passed before the girl awoke from the deep swoon into which she had fallen, during which time Anna Lee, who had known her and loved her in earlier days, sat anxiously watching by her side. Perhaps those few hours were the saddest of Anna's whole life. She had never seen such a wreck before—the wreck of youth, beauty, and innocence. She had heard of such things, and had shuddered at the bare imagination; but here lay, pale, and insensible before her, one whom she had loved,—one by whose side she had often sat, and whose slender arms had often been entwined about her neck—one who had left the flowery path of honour and virtue, and been a wanderer in the dark valley of sin.

She was alone by the bed upon which Grace lay, with her head bent partly from her, when a low sigh aroused her to consciousness. She turned quickly. The eyes of Grace were fixed intently upon her. But they soon closed with a languid motion, and the whole face of the wretched girl became marked by strong lines of anguish. Anna arose and leaned over her, and in a tender voice called her name. But there was no answer.

Her lips did, indeed, move convulsively, as if she were about to speak; but in an instant they were firmly compressed, and her head turned away.

No words of kindness from Anna, nor from any who approached her, could induce the girl to make a reply. She seemed to be in great mental suffering, for her lips remained strongly shut together, and her brows corrugated; and once, when Anna went to take her hand, she found the fingers tightly clenched.

Finding all efforts to get her to speak unavailing, she was left alone, in the hope that sleep would tranquilize her mind, and soften her feelings. But when her chamber was entered on the morning, it was found vacant. The unhappy girl had fled from virtue's rebuking presence.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION.

ANNA'S wedding-day quickly came. To her it brought mingled feelings of pleasure and sadness. The maiden was about to take upon herself a wife's duties,—to enter upon an untried sphere of action. To step from the peaceful happy home of her father, into the dwelling of a husband. To begin a new life of deeper and more varied emotions.

Towards her mother, whom she was about to leave, she felt an unusual tenderness; for she realized, in her own mind, how lonely that mother would be when she was away; and there were moments when, from this reason, she half-regretted having named so early a wedding-day. Then her thoughts would turn to the children over whom her care had been exercised, ever since they were babes in their mother's arms. She loved them truly—how could she leave them? Who could fill to them her place? Such thoughts would at times throw a deeply pensive shade over her feelings. But the intense love she bore the

chosen of her heart, would carry away her mind to him, and she would muse with delight over the thought of becoming one with him in marriage.

Thus passed the day, amid preparations for the ceremonies that were to take place in the evening. Anna was musing alone in her room just before nightfall, when her mother came in, and sitting down beside her, took her hand and warmly pressed it within her own. As she did so, the maiden leaned over against her, and let her head rest upon the bosom that had so often before pillowed it, looking up as she did so, into her mother's face with eyes swimming in tears of pure filial love.

"You are about to leave us, my dear child," Mrs. Lee said, in a voice half inaudible from emotion; and then paused to get a better command of her feelings. Anna closed her eyes to keep the tears from stealing over her face.

"You are about to leave us, Anna," resumed Mrs. Lee, "and I pray, that you may be as good a wife as you have been a daughter. I am sure you will. It is hard to part with you, my child; very hard; but it is right that you should go. You are a woman, and must act a woman's part. Act it well, and you will be a blessing to all. I

believe the man who has chosen you to be his companion through the journey of life, is worthy to claim your hand. I believe he will do all in his power to make you happy. Strive to do your part fully. Above all, look upon marriage as a divine institution, as an ordinance of the church. In making your vows, do so, consciously, in the sight of heaven, and fulfil those vows as a solemn religious obligation.

“ When you have become a wife, you will find yourself in a new world, with new thoughts and feelings, and altogether new relations. And you may not find your duties in that new world so simple, nor so easily performed as you have imagined. It is no light matter for two minds, bearing the relation that the masculine and feminine minds bear to each other, to enter upon the process of union; for one end of marriage is to cause two minds that are imperfect in separation, to unite and make one truly perfect man. If the human race had not fallen from the true order in which they were created, this union would be an easy and delightful task; but now it can only take place in the degree that there is a mutual restoration to true order, in the minds of the husband and wife. Just in the degree that each remains selfish, and thus in evil principles, will be the

difficulties and obstructions in the way of this union ; and the consequent unhappiness that will follow marriage.

“Your true duty, my dear child, will be to strive to remove from your own heart all that is contrary to divine laws, and to help your husband to do the same. Just so far as you do this, will you be happy, no matter what may be the external circumstances in which Providence may place you.

“But this work must be a gradual one, both with yourself and husband : and, therefore, in the very nature of things, there will arise states of mind in conflict with each other. You will feel, sometimes, like setting up your will against that of your husband, and he will be led into the same temptation. When this happens, Oh ! remember, my child, that forbearance and submission will be your only safe course. Do not listen a moment to the suggestions of pride. But be patient and yielding ; by so doing, you will help both your husband and yourself. You will elevate him into a purer region, where his vision will be clearer, and you will yourself come into that region.

“And now, what more shall I say to you ? How shall I rightly prepare you for your new duties ? How shall I guard you, more than by

the general precept, to shun all evil as a sin against God, and because it is a sin? If you do this, it will be well with you. The path of duty will be an easy path,—the way of life smooth.

“I give you away to your husband, with a confidence that few mothers can feel. You must, you will be happy in his love, for he is worthy of you. Oh! believe that you can never be more than worthy of the love of such a man as James Hartley. Cherish the deep affection he has for you with the tenderest care; for a heart like his is a rare jewel—it is priceless in value.”

Anna lay close to her mother's breast, and quiet as an infant.

More, much more of earnest precept was poured into her ear, to all of which the maiden listened with the most profound attention. Mrs. Lee lifted the veil for her child, and gave her new views of the marriage relation, and of her duties in it: when that child descended to the crowded rooms below, some hours afterwards, and plighted her faith before God and man, it was with sober feelings, and a strong internal resolution to act the wife's part truly, difficult as the task might be to perform.

Shall we say more? What more remains to be said? Anna Lee, the pure-hearted Anna Lee is

married to the man of her choice. She has passed safely through the perils of maidenhood, and is now a wife—and a wife wisely wedded.

But we must not lose sight of her. As a “Wife,” we will still follow her, and see how, in her new relations, she sustains the harmonious consistency of character that made her so lovely as a maiden, and blessed all who came within the sphere of her influence.

THE END.

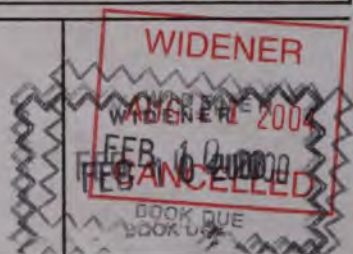


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